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For March

If you want an inspiration for fidelity, courage, and all the best instincts of a MAN, read Talbot Mundy's complete novelette, "For the Salt Which He Had Eaten." A splendidly written, stirring story of the Indian Mutiny days. See if you can read about old Mahommed Khan without getting a bit misty-eyed.

"In the Blizzard" (a tale of the Northwest Mounted), by Ralph Delamere Keefer and Stephen Chalmers, is the sort of yarn you ought to read on a snowy day. It'll help you to better appreciate 40-mile Grainger's highly original method of getting even with Haviland.

Unless you've actually done it, you couldn't get a better idea of what spending a stormy night off the Banks means than Frederick W. Wallace gives you in "Winter Fishing." Brrrr! but it's a vivid description all right!

This March number seems unusually full of big, stirring happenings. Every single yarn is "different." There's a grin or a thrill in every one of the 224 pages.

15 Cents

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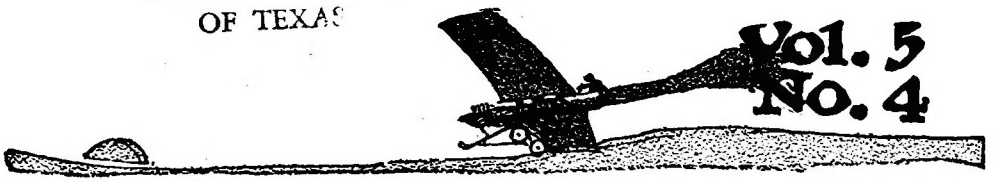

Vol. 5
No. 4

ADVENTURE

Arthur Sullivant Hoffman MANAGING EDITOR

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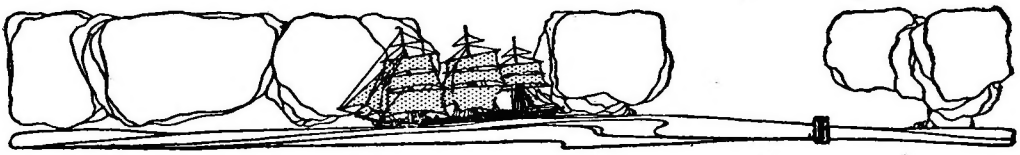

CASSIUS GRIFFITH gives the Camp-Fire the following interesting facts concerning "Cockney-No-Toes," in this issue:

. . . In 1908 I joined the *Narwhal* in San Francisco and made a cruise to the Behring and Arctic, lasting from March 10th to November 7th. On board was Cockney, known to all the whalers for twenty years or more, whose duty it was to remain in the "crow's-nest" at the foremasthead with the captain, when the boats were out, and signal the appearance of the whale by flags. Also, he was the "tankman," or man who broke stores from the tanks in the after hold. This berth was held by Cockney on account of his having his feet frozen while on the *Narwhal*—no such place existing on the other vessels—and since that time he has gone every voyage to the Arctic in her. As far as I could find, this happened about fifteen years ago; the whalers, at least the harpooners, dating events by reference to such instances as "the year the *Grampus* was lost," or "the voyage Kanaka Jim was killed," etc.

Cockney's feet, when in Esquimaux boots, or the boots which the Esquimaux woman made for him, were just round stumps, yet he could clamber up the ice-coated rigging as easily as the most agile foremast-hand. I had the story from two or three of the harpooners and from one of the mates (there are five of each on each vessel), and I have often heard others refer to it. Rather than exaggerate, the whalers do not put all the really hazardous details in, as such occurrences, or more serious, are only too ordinary.

ANTON RODRIGUEZ, the Portuguese negro harpooner, six feet four, as I have described, probably knows more about the happening, as, while he was not on the vessel at the time, he has been the constant companion of Cockney for many years and has had it from his own lips. I have told it as Anton told it to me, with the exception of describing the life aboard the vessel during Cockney's absence. As to the assault of the men, the whalers did not like to talk about it, but I have no doubt that it occurred (probably a little different from the way I have told it), as I know the officers would not hesitate in such a matter, as I personally know of one captain kicking a foremast-hand in the face, which caused his death within a few days.

The present captain of the *Narwhal*, Captain Leavitt, who lives in Portland, Maine, and who winters at Portland when not in the Arctic, also told me of it, generally, omitting the life on the ship and the meat-saw. Anton declared that the feet were severed with the meat-saw.

The whalers go into Winter quarters at Herschel Island, at the mouth of the MacKenzie River, away to the eastward, near Banks Land. One or more whalers winter there every season. Whether any vessel was there at the time of this happening, I don't know.

Cockney himself, at the only time he ever made any reference to the occasion, told me of beating the man with him repeatedly with the rope-end and that he had finally fallen; also that he screamed when the Captain removed the frozen parts. The whaler captain who did this was Captain———.

IF THE *Narwhal* has not been lost in the ice (a frequent occurrence in the north, there being now but seven whalers from a fleet which once numbered more than a hundred, most of them being sailing vessels; however, the season I made the voyage, the *William Baylies* was crushed between the floes in the Behring, our vessel taking a part of the crew), Cockney and Anton are in the Arctic at this time.

To return to the ships: They go to the Arctic provisioned for one, two or three seasons. Should they be caught, when provisioned for one season, it would naturally go hard for them during the Winter. As a matter of fact the *Narwhal* was not caught that season but was provisioned for two seasons, but for some reason ran short of food which necessitated the trip. As yet, in the Winter, they lay in a supply of caribou meat when the traveling permits. The nearness of our being held in 1908, when we came to the Straits and found the passage entirely blocked with ice, suggested that part to my mind.

When in Winter quarters some of the whaler officers live ashore, on the island, in skin igloos. Cockney got his dogs from the Esquimaux on the island. It is quite true that these natives have but little food, depending, as a matter of fact, upon flour from the whalers.

THE story of the trip, the death of his companion and his bringing him in, and the removing of the feet, is unquestionably true. Perhaps I have drawn a little in the scene aboard the vessel, but from what I have seen of the whalers and whaler life, it does not seem possible to fully describe the "hellships" and to exaggerate any part of their actions in such an instance.

The *Narwhal* and the names, with the exception of the captain and the mate, are correct. The *Narwhal* and Cockney may be found in the mud flats over at Oakland, usually, every Winter now. He remains aboard all the time as watchman.

P.S. I may say that I was shipped on the *Narwhal*, slept in the extra bunk in the harpooners' room, but as the captain knew what I went for, I had little duty and was allowed to go ashore, in the boats, etc.

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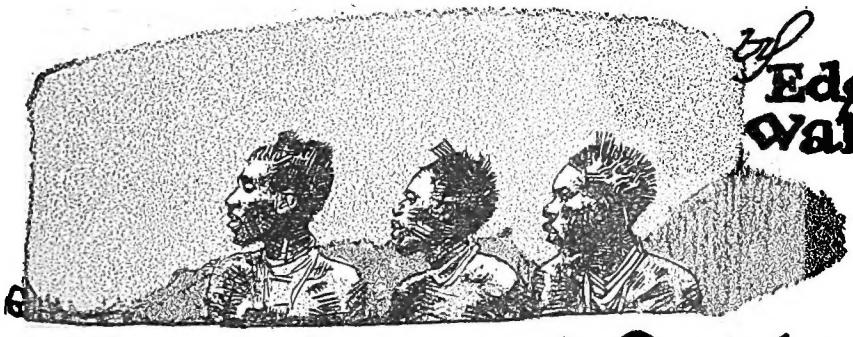

by Edgar Wallace

The Crime of Sanders

IT IS a fine thing to be confidential clerk to a millionaire, to have placed to your credit every month of your life the sum of two hundred dollars.

This was the experience of a man named Jordon, a young man of considerable character, as you shall learn.

He had a pretty wife and a beautiful baby, and they were a contented, happy little family.

Unfortunately, the millionaire died, and though he left "Five hundred dollars to my secretary, Derik Arthur Jordon," the sum inadequately compensated young Jordon for the two hundred dollars which came to his banker with monotonous regularity every month.

A millionaire's confidential clerk is a drug on a market which knows few millionaires and those admirably suited in the matter of secretaries. The young man spent six months, and most of his money, before he came to understand that his opportunities were limited.

Had he been just an ordinary clerk, with the requisite knowledge of shorthand and typewriting, he would have found no difficulty in securing employment. Had he an acquaintance with a thousand and one businesses he might have been "placed," but he had specialized in millionaires—an erratic millionaire whose memory and purse and *Times* he was—and the world of business had no opening for his undisputed qualities. He had exactly $729 left of his savings and his legacy when the fact was brought home to him.

Then it happened that returning to his suburban home one evening he met a man who had just met another man, who on a capital of a few pounds had amassed a fortune by trading on the West Coast of Africa.

Jordon sought an introduction to the friend and they met in the splendor of a West-End hotel, where the trader drank whisky and talked of his "little place at Minehead."

"It's dead easy," he said, "especially if you get into a country which isn't overrun by traders—like Sanders's territory. But of course that's impossible. Sanders is a swine to traders—won't have 'em in his territory. He's a sort of little god."

He drew a picture of the wonderful possibilities of such a field and the young man went home full of the prospect.

He and his pretty wife sat up till the early hours of the morning discussing the

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plan. They got a map of Africa showing the territory over which Mr. Commissioner Sanders had dominion. It seemed absurdly small, but it was a little map.

"I wonder what he is like?" asked the girl thoughtfully.

She concealed her own agony of mind at the prospect of parting with him, because she was a woman and women are very extraordinary in their unselfishness.

"Perhaps he would let you go in," she said wistfully. "I'm sure he would if he knew what it meant to us."

Jordon shook his head a little ruefully.

"I don't suppose our position will have much influence with him. Ammett says that he's a very strict man, and unpleasant to deal with."

They went into the cost of the expedition. By selling up the furniture and moving into lodgings it could be done. He could leave her two hundred and fifty or three hundred dollars, sufficient to last her with economy for a year. The rest he would sink into trading goods—a list of which the successful trader had given him.

II

SOME weeks later Jordon took the great step.

He sailed from Liverpool with a stock of gewgaws and cloth, and as the tiny figure of his weeping girl-wife grew more and more indistinct on the quay he realized, as all men realize sooner or later, that death is not the most painful of humanity's trials.

He did not confide his plans to the men he met on board—hard-drinking men in white duck—but what he learned of Sanders made his heart sink.

Sanders went down to the beach to meet the steamer, which usually brought the mails.

A tall young man in white sprang from the boat and a portmanteau followed. Sanders looked at the newcomer with suspicion. He did not love strangers—his reputation in this respect was known from Dacca to Mossamades, and the phrase "Sanders's welcome" had become idiomatic.

"Good morning," said Jordon, with his heart quaking.

"Good morning," said Sanders. "Do you wish to see me? I am afraid that you will not have much time. The boat does not stay very long."

The newcomer bit his lip.

"I am not going on yet," he said; "I—I want to stay here."

"Oh!" said Sanders without enthusiasm.

In the cool of the veranda, over an iced drink, the young man spoke without reserve.

"I've come out to make a fortune, or at any rate a living," he said, and the thought of the girl he had left in her tiny lodging gave him courage.

"You've come to a very unlikely place," said Sanders, smiling in spite of his resentment at this intrusion on his privacy.

"That is why I came," said the other with surprising boldness; "all the likely places are used up and I have got to justify my existence somehow or other."

Without attempting to hide his own poverty or his inexperience, he told his story.

The Commissioner was interested. This side of life, as the young man recited it, was new to him; it was a life which he himself did not know or understand, this struggle for existence in a great uncaring city.

"You seem to have had the average kind of bad luck," he said kindly. "I can't advise you to go back because you have burned your boats; and in the second place because I am pretty sure you would not go. Let me think."

He frowned at the police huts shimmering in the morning heat; he sought inspiration in the glimpse of yellow sands and thundering seas which was obtainable from where he sat.

"I could find work for you," he said, "if you spoke any of the languages, which of course you do not, or if——"

He was silent.

"I am supposed to have an assistant," he said at last, "and I could appoint you——"

The young man shook his head.

"That's good of you, sir," he said, "but I'd be no use to you. Give me a trader's license, because I believe you've got authority to do so. In fact, nobody else seems to have that authority."

Sanders grinned. There was a license once issued by the Administrator's secretary to a Eurasian trader—but that story will keep.

"I will give you the license," he said after a pause, and the young man's heart

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leaped. "It will cost you a guinea to start with, all the money you've got eventually, and in course of time you will probably add to the bill of costs your health and your life."

HE ISSUED the license that day. For a couple of weeks the young man remained his guest while his stores came on from Sierra Leone.

Sanders found an interpreter and head man for him, and the young trader started off in his new canoe to wrestle with fortune, after writing a letter to his wife, in which he described Sanders as something between a Peabody and an angel.

Before he went, Sanders gave him a few words of advice.

"I do not like traders," he said, "and I never issue a license if I can help it. Do not upset my people; do not make any kind of trouble. Avoid the N'gombi, who are thieves, and the Bush people, who are chronic homicides. The Isisi will buy salt with rubber—there is plenty of rubber in the back country. The Ochori will buy cloth with gum. By the way, Bosambo, the chief, speaks English and will probably try to swindle you. Good-by and good luck."

III

HE WATCHED the canoe till it disappeared round the bluff and went back to his hut to record the departure in his diary.

After which he sat himself down to decipher a long despatch in Arabic from one of his intelligence men—a despatch which dealt minutely with three other strangers who had come to his land, and arriving mysteriously, had as mysteriously disappeared.

These were three men who dwelt by the river, being of no village, and of no defined race, for they were settled on the borderline between the Akasava, Isisi and Ochori, and though one had the lateral face marks of a Bogindi man, yet there was little doubt that he was not of that people.

They lived in three huts, set side by side, and they fished and hunted. A strange fact was that none of these men had wives.

For some reason which the psychologist will understand, the circumstance isolated the three from their kind. Women avoided them, and when they came to adjacent villages to sell or to buy, the girls and the young matrons went into their huts and peered at them fearfully.

The chief of the three was named M'Karoka—or so it sounded—and he was a broad tall man of surly countenance, sparing of speech and unpleasant in dispute. He accounted himself outside of all village laws, though he broke none, and as he acted and thought, so did his fellows.

Sinister though the people of the Ochori regarded these outlanders, they gave nobody cause for complaint. Their lives, if strange, were unoffensive; they did not steal nor abuse the privileges which were theirs. They were honest in their dealings and cleanly.

Sanders, who had made inquiries through channels which were familiar enough to those who understand the means by which a savage country is governed, received no ill report, and left the three to their own devices. They fished, hunted, grew a little maize in a garden they won from the forest, sought for and prepared manioc for consumption, and behaved as honest husbandmen should do.

One day they disappeared.

They vanished as though the earth had opened and swallowed them up. None saw their going. Their huts were left, untouched and unspoiled; their growing crops stood in the gardens they had cultivated, the drying fish hung on lines between poles just as they had placed them, and the solitary canoe they shared was left beached.

But the three had gone. The forest, impenetrable, unknown, had swallowed them, and no more was heard of them.

Sanders, who was never surprised and took it for granted that the most mysterious of happenings had a natural explanation, did no more than send word to the forest villages asking for news of the three men. This was not forthcoming and the matter ended so far as the Commissioner was concerned.

HE HEARD of Jordon throughout the year. His progress was duly charted by Sanders's agents from village to village. Letters addressed to his wife came to headquarters and were forwarded. Such accounts as reached Sanders were to the effect that the young man was

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finding it difficult to make both ends meet. The rubber that arrived at irregular intervals for shipment was not of the best quality, and one load of gum was lost in the river by the overturning of the canoe.

Sanders, knowing the young man's story, was worried and caused word to go up river that patronage of the trader would be pleasing to the Commissioner.

Then one day, a year after he had set forth, Jordon unexpectedly turned up at headquarters, thinner, burned black by the sun and possessor of a straggling beard.

He came in an old canoe with four paddles, and he brought nothing with him save his rifle, his cooking-pots and bedding.

His clothes were patched and soiled, h wore clumsy moccasins of skin and helmet which was no longer white and was considerably battered.

He had learned something and greeted Sanders fluently in the Bomongo dialect.

"*Chasi O!*" he said with a bitter little laugh as he stepped from the canoe, and that word meant "finished" in a certain river dialect.

"As bad as that!" said Sanders.

"Pretty nearly," replied the other. "I'm no trader, Mr. Sanders—I'm a born philanthropist."

He laughed again and Sanders smiled in sympathy.

"I've seen a lot of life," he said, "but it doesn't pay dividends."

Sanders took him to the residency and found a suit that nearly fitted him.

"I'll have just one more try," Jordon went on, "then I light out for another field."

There were letters awaiting him, letters of infinite sweetness and patience. Letters filled with heroic lies, but too transparent to deceive anybody.

The young man read them and went old looking.

There were remittances from his agent at Sierra Leone—very small indeed were these after commissions and the like had been subtracted. Still there was enough to lay in a fresh trading-stock, and three weeks later the young man again disappeared into the unknown.

His departure from headquarters coincided with the return of one of the mysterious three.

IV

THE mysterious one came back alone to the place by the river. The huts had disappeared, the garden was again forest, the canoe rotted on the beach, for none had dared disturb it.

He set to work to rebuild a hut. He cleared the garden unaided, and settled down in solitude to the routine of life. He was the chief of the three, M'Karoka, and, like two men who had disappeared, a man of splendid physique.

Sanders heard of his return, and the next time he passed that way he landed.

The man was squatting before his fire, stirring the contents of a steaming pot as Sanders came into sight round the hut which had screened his landing.

He leaped to his feet nimbly, looked for a moment as though he would run away, thought better of it, raised his hand, palm outward, in salute.

"*Inkos*," he said in a deep booming voice.

It was an unusual greeting, yet dimly familiar.

"I bring happiness," said Sanders, using a form of speech peculiar to the Ochori, "yet since you are a stranger, I would ask you what you do, and why do you dwell apart from your own people, for I am the King's eye and see for him."

The man spoke slowly, and it was evident to Sanders that the Ochori was not his speech, for he would sometimes hesitate for a word, and sometimes fill the deficiency with a word of Swaheli.

"I am from a far country, lord chief," he said, "I and my two cousins. Many moons we journeyed and we came to this place. Then for certain reasons we returned to our land. And when we did that which we had to do, we started to come back. And one named Villim was killed by a lion and another died of sickness and I came alone, and here I sit till the appointed time."

There was a ring of truth in the man's speech. Sanders had an instinct for such truth and knew that he had not lied.

"What are your people?" he asked. "For it is plain to me that you are a foreigner and like none that I know save one race, the race of the great one, Ketcewayo."

"You have spoken, lord," said the man gravely, "for though I eat fish, I am of the Zulu people and I have killed men."

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Sanders eyed him in silence. It was an astounding statement the man made—that he had walked four thousand miles across desert and river and forest, through a hundred hostile nations, had returned those four thousand miles with his companions and again covered the distance.

Yet he was indisputably a Zulu; Sanders knew that much from the moment he had raised his hand in salute and greeted him as "prince."

"Rest here," he said; "keep the law and do ill to none, and you shall be free as any man—it is finished."

Again the stranger raised his hand.

SANDERS pursued a leisurely way down the river, for no pressing matter called him either to headquarters or to any particular village.

He passed Jordon's canoe going up stream and megaphoned a cheery greeting.

The young man, though the reverse of cheerful, responded, waving his hand to the white-clad figure on the bridge of the *Zaire*.

It was with a heavy heart he went on. His stock was dwindling and he had little to show for his labors. Not even the most tempting and the most gaudy of Manchester goods had induced the lazy Isisi to collect rubber. They offered him dried fish, tiny chickens and service for his desirable cloth and beads, but rubber or gum they were disinclined to collect.

Night was coming on when he made the hut of the solitary stranger. He directed his paddlers to the beach and landed for the night. Whilst his four men lit a fire, he went on to the hut.

M'Karoka with folded arms watched his approach.

No other man on the river but would have hastened forward to pay tribute, for black is black and white is white, whether the white man be Commissioner or trader.

Jordon had been long enough on the river to see in the attitude of indifference a hint of ungraciousness.

Yet the man was polite.

Together they sat and haggled over the price of a piece of cloth. M'Karoka had no use for beads, and when Jordon set his little tent up on the shore the man was helpful and seemed used to the peculiar ways of tents.

But the most extraordinary circumstance was that M'Karoka had paid for his purchase in money. He had entered his hut when the bargain had been completed and reappeared with a golden sovereign.

He paid four times the value of the cloth, because the negotiations had been conducted on a gum basis.

Jordon was thinking this matter out when he retired for the night. It puzzled him, because money was, as he knew, unknown on the river.

He went to sleep to dream of his suburban home and the pale face of his pretty wife.

He woke suddenly.

It was still night. Outside he could hear the *swish, swish* of the river and the faint murmur of the trees.

But these had not wakened him.

There were voices outside the tent, voices that spoke in a language he could not understand.

He pulled on his mosquito boots and opened the fly of the tent.

There was a moon, and he saw M'Karoka standing before his hut, and with him was another.

They were quarreling and the fierce voice of the newcomer was raised in anger.

Then of a sudden, before Jordon could reach his revolver, the stranger stepped back a pace and struck twice at M'Karoka.

Jordon saw the gleam of steel in the moonlight; stooped and found his revolver and dashed out of the tent.

M'Karoka lay upon the ground and his assailant had dashed for the river.

He leaped into Jordon's canoe. With a stroke he severed the native rope which moored the craft to the shore and paddled frantically to mid-stream.

Three times Jordon fired at him. At the third shot he slid overboard, like a man suddenly tired.

"Swim out and bring the canoe," ordered Jordon, and turned his attention to M'Karoka.

THE man was dying; it was unnecessary to have an extensive knowledge of surgery, to see that he was wounded beyond recovery.

Jordon attempted to plug the more terrible of the chest wounds and to arrest the bleeding. The Zulu opened his eyes.

"Bass," he said faintly, "what came of Villim?"*

*This man's name was probably Wilhelm or William.

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"I think he is dead," said Jordon.

M'Karoka closed his eyes.

"Listen, bass," he said after a while. "You will tell Sandi that I lied when I said Villim was dead, though all else was true. We each took our share of the stones, then we went back because they were no use to us in this far land. Some we changed for money, then we had to fly—and Villim tried to murder us so that he might have all—and we beat him, taking from him his stones and he ran into the forest——"

He paused, for he found difficulty in speaking.

When he spoke again it was in the language which Jordon could not understand—the language the men had spoken when they had quarreled.

He spoke vehemently, then seemed to realize that he was not understood, for he changed his speech to the Ochori dialect.

"Under the fire in my hut," he gasped, "are many stones, master. They are for you, because you killed Villim——"

He died soon afterward.

In the morning Jordon cleared away the ashes of the fire and dug through the baked earth. Two feet below the surface he came upon a parcel wrapped in innumerable coverings of native cloth.

He opened it eagerly, his hand shaking. There were twenty or thirty pebbles, varying in size from a marble to a pea. They were of irregular size and mouse-colored.

Jordon found his training as secretary to a South African millionaire useful, for he knew these to be uncut diamonds.

V

SANDERS listened to the story, incoherently told.

Jordon was beside himself with joy.

"Think of it, Mr. Sanders," he said, "think of that dear little wife of mine and that dear kiddie! They're nearly starving, I know it—I can read between the lines of her letter. And at a moment when everything seems to be going wrong, this great fortune comes——"

Sanders let him rave on, not attempting to check him. The homeward-bound steamer lay in the roadstead, her launch bobbed and swayed in the swell by the beach.

"You arrived in time," said Sanders grimly. "If I were you, I should forget that you'd ever told me anything about this affair, and I shouldn't talk about it when I got home if I were you. Good-by."

He held out his hand and Jordon gripped.

"You've been kindness itself," he began.

"Good-by," said the Commissioner; "you'd better run, or the launch will go without you."

He did not wait to see the last of the trader, but turned abruptly and went back to the residency.

He opened his desk and took out a printed document:

TO ALL COMMISSIONERS, MAGISTRATES, CHIEFS OF POLICE, DEPUTY COMMISSIONERS.

Wanted on a warrant issued by the chief magistrate of Kimberley:

Villim Dobomo, Joseph M'Karoka, Joseph Kama, Zulus, charged with illicit diamond buying and believed to be working their way northward through Barosheland, Angola and the Congo.

Accused men disappeared from Kimberley two years ago, but have been seen recently in the neighborhood of that town. It is now known that they have returned north.

At the foot of the communication was a written note from Sanders's chief:

"Please state if anything is known of these men."

Sanders sat staring at the document for a long time.

His duty was of course to report the matter and to confiscate the diamonds in the possession of Jordon.

"A young wife and a baby," said Sanders thoughtfully. "How infernally improvident these people are."

He took up his pen and wrote:

"Unknown. Sanders."

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Slim Jack's Four Notches

by Hapsburg Liebe

"OUTLAWS—did you ask me if we ever had outlaws in this part of the country?"

Eleazer Mott, gray-haired driver of the old-fashioned stage-coach that ran between the Yellow Creek gold-mining camp and a railway station, looked somewhat interestedly toward the Easterner, who occupied the seat beside him.

The Easterner admitted that he had indeed been so bold as to ask the question.

"My answer is yes," said Mott, with a fling of his long whip toward the heads of his leaders. "In fact," he continued, "I can count the months on my fingers since this section was all stirred up on account o' five men of the black mask and the big blue revolver. Here's how it come about:

"STRANGER, right on the start I want to impress on you this: That God A'mighty never put a better heart into a man's breast than He put into the breast of Slim Jack Gorman. You can find dozens of widows and orphans in this State who will blink at the eye at the mention of his name, and who will tell you that he brought 'em grub and left 'em money when they needed it mighty bad. But I can't say that much for the other four—Chuck Orton, Little Farley Dix, Skillet Moore, and Dog Langenfelder. These latter-named men are now just where they ought to be—and so is Gorman, I reckon, for that matter.

"Jack was slender, tanned, young, and fine-lookin', with his blue eyes and brown hair. The beginnin' of his career as an outlaw was brought about through a love affair. He loved a girl named Sue Bailey, who was from the East, and who lived with her dad in a shanty at the upper end o' the camp. Sue was as pretty as they make 'em, and as smart as a fiddlestring. She loved Jack all right, but another man came along, dazzled her with money and lied about Jack, and she married him—like the fools women are, about once in their lives.

"And maybe poverty made Sue a fool in this case; you see, old Bailey wasn't able to do much. The man who won her hand was Chuck Orton, although he had mingled with us under another name. He was dark and heavy, and mighty good-lookin', all but his eyes, which was like a rattler's when he got the least riled over anything.

"Well, on the evenin' of the weddin', a man dropped off o' the newly arrived stage with a fresh newspaper not over a week old, which same he passed around. We seen on the second page a picture of Orton, and under it a statement to the effect that he was a badly wanted man owin' to havin' committed two cases of cold-blood murder

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with robbery attached and other charges too numerous to dwell upon.

"We hurried to the Bailey shanty, where a parson from Tenville was sayin' the marriage rites, and entered just as the sky pilot was pronouncin' the couple man and wife. I poked a gun in Orton's face; he knocked it out o' my hand, went through a window, and was gone with the speed of a jackrabbit.

"SO THERE was poor little Sue Bailey, a deserted wife before the echo of the preacher's words had died away, and also a disillusioned woman. And the minute she seen what a fool she'd been, I heard her sob out Jack Gorman's name.

"Sue's father, old as he was, mounted the sky pilot's hoss and gave chase to the man who had treated his daughter so low-down mean. About half a mile down the creek Orton stopped, waylaid old Bailey, and deliberately killed him, after which he disappeared before any of the rest of us could get him. So the preacher had a funeral to carry out, as well as a weddin'.

"Slim Jack Gorman went away and was gone a week, of course, on the hunt of Chuck Orton. The first I knowed of his bein' back was when he come walkin' up the path to my shanty, late one evenin'. He walked slow and weary-like; he looked tired, his young face was troubled, and he stared hard at the ground. My throat swelled up in spite of me. I'd promised Philip Gorman—as white a man as ever slapped the face of the earth with a shoe-bottom—that I'd always take care of Jack; and I felt now that Jack had reached a place along the dim trail of life where nobody could take care of him.

"'Uncle Mott,' says he, sittin' down aside o' me in the shanty door, 'Uncle Mott, we've got to make up enough money among us to send Sue Bailey back East. She wouldn't be human if she could stand it here now. I don't know how we're goin' to manage it, either; because there ain't a man here who's got a cent to spare.'

"He was right about that latter statement. We'd had it mighty hard for several months, and there was lots of us that hadn't even enough to eat. I didn't say anything, because I didn't know of anything to say that would help. Jack knowed as well as I did that I wasn't makin' hoss feed off o' the stage business at the time.

"But Slim Jack seemed to arrive at a solution.

"'By George!' he says right sudden.

And with that he gets up and hurries away, leavin' me wonderin' where he'd been hit at.

"It wasn't at all like young Gorman to do this vanishin' act with no explanation whatever. I couldn't make it out to save me. I gets up, throws down the bit of soapbox on which I'd been whittlin', and steps over to see Sue Bailey.

"It was pitch dark by the time I got to her little house. I'll never forget how all-fired lonesome it looked; there was no light in either of the two rooms, and the silence of it would have made a grave seem rather noisy. I noted the difference mighty quick; you see, I'd visited with old man Bailey a good deal in the past.

"I rapped soft-like on the door.

"'Who is it?' says Sue's voice, not a bit scared, but like she didn't appreciate bein' called on.

"'It's me—Uncle Mott,' says I, as gentle as I could. 'I want to speak to you, Sue, little girl,' I adds.

"The floor creaked, a match was scratched, a lamp was lit. The door opened about half, and Sue invited me in. I seen that her eyes was all red, and that her face looked like it had been dreened of color and blood. That woman was in a torment of sufferin'; and she had a perfect right to be, what with all the disappointment and sorrow she'd had.

"I sat down, and so did the girl; but we left old Bailey's chair unoccupied for the sake of respect.

"'Sue,' I asks presently, 'wouldn't you like to go back home, back East?'

"'No,' says Sue, hangin' her pretty, tousled head—her hair was full o' sunshine, and it was pretty even when it was tousled.

"'Back to your own people?' I goes on, leanin' forward.

"'No,' repeats Sue, lookin' up; and I seen that her eyes seemed mighty determined.

"'But——' I begins, when the poor, heart-broken little thing went to her knees on the floor, with her face buried between my arm and my side, and all sobbin' and broke-up like.

"'Uncle Mott,' she says, as I petted her on the head, 'd-d-do you reckon J-j-jack would forgive me and take me back? Oh,

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I was such a f-f-fool—such an aw-awful fool!'

"'I don't reckon nothin' about it,' I says; 'I know—I know Jack Gorman would give his chance of Heaven for the privilege of takin' you back. Jack Gorman is a man among a million, little girl.'

"'Did he tell you that,-Uncle Mott?' asks Sue, sort o' hopeful.

"'No,' I answers; 'but I've knowed Jack Gorman from the cradle up, and I'm pretty well acquainted with his timber. The only thing in the way is to get him to believe that you really care for him; it may be hard to prove that to him, you see, as he is 'most too young to understand the sudden flights of fancy girls are subject to.'

"Without another word, I goes over to have a joust with Slim Jack. He wasn't at home; the door was swingin' open, and his rifle and both his revolvers, as well as his canteens, was gone. I went down to the Red Violet Saloon and looked for him, but he wasn't there; I inquired at several of the shanties, but nobody knowed anything about him. The earth, so to speak, had opened and swallowed the boy up.

"ALL the next day I looked for him to turn up, havin' got another man to do my drivin'. Jack didn't come in. But the fourth mornin' later I found an envelope that had been shoved under the door, and in it there was some two hundred dollars. Also there was a folded sheet of paper in with the money; and from the sheet I read this:

"DEAR UNCLE MOTT:

Give the enclosed to Sue and tell her you had borrowed it from her father. Tell Sue Bailey—God bless her—tell her I wish it had been me she married. Tell her that for me, Uncle Mott. When a man never even had a mother to love, he loves a woman like hell, don't he, Uncle Mott?

"It was signed simply Slim Jack.

"I sat down in the doorway and watched the sun creep up over the hot and shimmerin' hills without a thought as to the time o' day. Where had the boy got that money? It wasn't long, however, until I'd figured out where he'd got it; and then I begun to see the mountin' sun through a haze. You see, I'm a little old, and I've been around so many of these every-day tragedies of the commonplace that I'm quick with the small amount of sympathy I've got in me.

"The envelope and the roll of bank-notes went into the deepest corner of my deepest pocket. I was somehow afraid to face Sue Bailey with the money. Women have a sort of unaccountable way o' puttin' two and two together, you know, and thus arrivin' at certain conclusions. But late that afternoon I decided that I'd better do what Jack wanted done, so I went over to see the girl and handed her both the lie and the money at one and the same time. But I didn't mention Jack to her.

"Sue looked very much like she didn't believe it; and suddenly she asks me if I'd be willin' to swear to the tale I'd just told.

"'Why,' I dodges, 'I reckon I could; but it ain't necessary, is it?'

"Happenin' to cast my eyes toward the Red Violet, which was some little distance below us, I seen that the stage was arrivin', just in from the railroad. Sue seen it, too, and her fine blue eyes lit up. I believe she hoped Jack Gorman had come back.

"'Let's go down there, Uncle Mott,' says she.

"So we went down.

"When we walked up, two old miners and a tenderfoot who had come in on the stage, was mouthin' excitedly to the group of men that had stepped out of Elversett's place to see 'em. The tenderfoot's voice rose above them of the miners, however, and we heard every word of it plain:

"'A real hold-up!' he was sayin'. 'Yes, sir, gentlemen, a real article in the hold-up line! I'm out fifteen dollars; but I don't know but what I'd 'a' give that just for the sake of writin' back to my folks that I'd been held up. Stage? No, the train, the T. & A. One-man thing, too; young fellow with the finest blue eyes you ever saw stuck in a mortal's head. A man on the train knowed him, all right, and there's a reward for him by now. Name was Jack Gorman.'

"SLIM JACK GORMAN a bandit—a train-robber! But I'd already thought it so hard that I thought I knowed it. Still, it had been for the sake of the girl; and I think both the girl and me liked him all the better for it. The crowd gaped like they was takin' a small attack of lockjaw. I took Sue Bailey by the arm and led her, starin' ahead like

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some clean demented person, back to her little house.

"'No wonder you wouldn't swear where this money come from,' says Sue, when we had reached the shanty door. 'But I'm goin' to keep it, Uncle Mott; I'm goin' to keep it as long as I live.'

"I owned up then. Also I showed her the letter Jack had wrote me. Her face became changed in a second, seemin' to be so glad and sweet. I couldn't bring myself to the point of remindin' her that Jack had dug a big gulf between her and him by layin' himself due to bein' outlawed. I turned and went to my unpalatial dwellin' place without a word except a 'good evenin'.'

II

"THE iron hand of the law seemed to take great pleasure in reachin' out for the scalp of young Gorman. Everywhere reward notices was posted; everywhere an officer could be found who was lookin' for Slim Jack's trail. But Slim Jack was too sharp for 'em, dodgin' 'em every time. He got to be an expert shot, although he never hurt anybody. He robbed trains, stages, lone persons, and everything that come his way; and this money he donated to poor people, all but enough to live on.

"Then the usual thing happened: a few little bandits on the coyote order got to doin' things not in the line of an honorable outlaw and layin' it all at Slim Jack's door. It's always that way when a decent outlaw crops up—a bunch o' low-down coyotes too cowardly to come out in the open forges the lion's tracks in the dark. You see, these skunks would leave behind something with Jack's name on it, which was to lay a false clue and shift the blame.

"The result of this was that the gulf between Jack and Sue was greatly widened. The dirty work of the lesser bandits had been the last straw on the law's back, and the law was therefore as bitter as gall. The law wanted Slim Jack, and it didn't make any bones about his bein' dead or alive. It sure looked bad for the boy.

"Well, just as the law had a last straw, so did Slim Jack Gorman have a last straw.

"Slim Jack, ridin' a lean roan, which same was his favorite hoss and a regular pet, rode into Yellow Creek one day to see his friends —us Yellow Creekers was all Jack's friends, you understand, and there was no danger for him in Yellow Creek. After callin' on Sue Bailey, he come on down to the Red Violet, where we all toasted him and drunk to his future happiness—far away as happiness seemed. Then there stepped in Big Jake Saffer, owner of the Bar-S Ranch, as mad as a wet hen in the Winter-time. Big Jake carried two forty-fives and a Winch, and he was sure itchin' to do some pyrotechnics.

"He didn't see Slim Jack, because we was between Slim Jack and him.

"'Say,' he says, 'that low-down coyote of a Slim Jack Gorman went to my house last night, tied my wife up by the thumbs, and made her tell where my money was—the money I had to pay off my cowmen! My wife was unconscious when I found her. If any of you knows where this scoundrel Gorman is, I want you to tell me. I won't rest until I've killed him, gentlemen! That's me, Big Jake Saffer, and I mean every bit of what I said.'

"'Now, how do you know it was Slim Jack?' asks Jim Elversett.

"'How do I know!" blares Saffer, his eyes shootin' brimstone. 'This,' he says, handin' us an envelope, 'is how I know. He accidentally dropped this where he done the job o' robbin' a defenseless woman!'

"The envelope had Jack Gorman's name on it.

"We kept well between Jack and the big ranchman. We knowed Jack had never harmed a hair of any woman's head. It was the old story—some dirty hound of perdition doin' a low-down job and then packin' it off on Slim Jack, the whitest outlaw that ever pounded saddle-leather.

"'More'n that,' Big Jake goes on, 'he killed my Mexican housekeeper.'

"So here was murder added to the long list at last. This was Slim Jack's last straw.

"Slim Jack steps out before the ranchman. We held Big Jake, and helped Gorman explain to him. But we didn't convince Saffer worth a cent. Our arguin' didn't make any show at all.

"Suddenly Jack hikes out his right-hand gun and cuts a notch on its handle.

"'I happen to recognize the handwritin' on that envelope,' says he, pocketin' his knife. 'It belongs to that fine scoundrel who killed old man Bailey, Mr. Chuck Orton. Now, I'm goin' to fill Mr. Orton's pizen hide so full of bullet-holes that it won't

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hold shucks—I meant to do it, anyway. The notch on my gun-butt, gentlemen, is put there in advance.'

"With that he strides out of the Red Violet, gets on his roan hoss, and goes lickety-split up the trail to the north. I knowed then that he was fully determined to make good that notch on the handle of his right-hand gun. It wasn't like Jack to want to kill a man—for it's a terrible thing to kill a man; he had been drove to it by circumstances beyond his control, so to speak.

"WELL, our friend Gorman played quiet for two months, durin' which time he done nothin' but spot the little bandits who was doin' what you'd call unhandsome robbin' and layin' it at his door. The result of this was that he got a dead line on three more men besides Chuck Orton, namely: Little Farley Dix, a wizened skunk with greaser blood in him; Skillet Moore, a low, dark and heavy man something on the order of Orton; and Dog Langenfelder, a lean, angular, and wicked-lookin' man with a mighty keen eye in one side of his head and none in the other. All of these men banded together. Also, Jack found out that all four of 'em was badly wanted in our Western cities for hangin' crimes.

"Slim Jack was made desperate by the things he'd found out durin' that two months' roundin' up of details. His right-hand gun now bore four deep and well-defined notches.

"But there is a thing called Fate that decides human destinies in a fashion different from the way we would shape them, sometimes.

"Slim Jack Gorman, ridin' through a little valley in the hills some forty miles north of the Yellow Creek camp, suddenly felt a queer, half-delirious feelin' cross his brain. He reeled and almost fell from the saddle; then he passed a hand over his tanned face, smiled weakly, and straightened himself with something of an effort. He knowed what it was: loss of sleep and the eternal vigilance connected with trailin' the four little bandits was gettin' in their work. He realized that he must soon rest—and that he must have water or die.

"A mile further on he found a stream that ran a little way from a spring, and then soaked up in the burnin' sand. From this he drank all he could hold; but it was bad, and it made him sick at the stomach. Still determined, he mounted his roan hoss and rode on, followin' the trail of the four hosses with his cocked Winch in one hand and his bridle in the other.

"Darkness found him between two monster ranges of hills covered sparsely with scrub and ribbed with gray rock. His hoss followed the dim tracks now of its own accord, and he allowed it full rein. Then the light from a camp-fire a short distance ahead broke upon his eye.

"At last he had caught up with the men who were to be shot to make the notches on his right-hand gun bona fide!

"He stopped his hoss and slid easy from the saddle. A near-by clump of mesquit served as a place to tether the roan. Gorman looked to his revolvers and rifle by the feel of his fingers, after which he begun to steal up the rocky side of the steep hill to his left, holdin' to the scrub and takin' great care that he didn't loosen a rock to go rollin' to the bottom with a big noise.

"It took him the best part of an hour to gain a point just above the fire, but he hadn't made any noise on the little journey. Peerin' cautiously over a big rock, he seen the four men sittin' around a pile of bright coals, all smokin' and laughin' and as ignorant of the presence of danger as children.

"The revolver was quickest to shoot, and it was as sure as the rifle at such short range. Slim Jack believed he could plug the whole four so rapid that none of 'em would ever know who had killed 'em. He leveled his right-hand gun and took a good aim at Chuck Orton's heart; but just as he was about to let drive and end the mortal existence of that hound of perdition, the feelin' of deliriousness crossed his brain again. He lowered the gun and held tight to the rocks to keep his balance.

"But Slim Jack Gorman had suffered too much, and come too far, to be easy persuaded from havin' his revenge. Again the big revolver was aimed; again his right eye—an eye as cold and as hard now as the steel of his leveled weapon—looked over the sights and to a vital spot on Chuck Orton's breast.

"'I must be quick,' he whispers to himself, 'I——'

"THE firelight faded, and all become suddenly dark to Jack. The voices of the men below become strange and distant to his buzzin' ears. Once more the gun was lowered, without fresh powder-

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smoke in its barrel. His hands clutched at the stone that he might not fall.

"Then Slim Jack's mind growed feverishly alert, and with it come the sight of his eyes. He leveled the revolver again.

"But this would be murder! Murder with great provocation, but murder just the same—the takin' of human life to satisfy a human hate and a human desire for revenge. It would make the gulf between him and Sue Bailey as wide as the bounds o' space. Sue! He seemed to be back in Yellow Creek, at the shanty where Sue Bailey had taught the few children of the surroundin' section their Sunday-school lessons; he was watchin' her through a window, as he had done dozens of times, the while wishin' that he too was a child that she might teach him. He seemed to see the chart on the wall, with the Ten Commandments of God; and Sue Bailey's finger was pointin' to the one that said, 'THOU SHALT NOT KILL!'

"The picture faded, as did the firelight. Again the voices of the men below become distant. Then Slim Jack succumbed to the long strain; there was the rattle of loose stones, and the thud of a fallin' body. He had sunk into the dark.

"Chuck Orton and his three companions straightened at the sounds from above. They drawed revolvers as they went to their feet. Chuck took two steps toward the hillside.

"'What was that?' he says, under his breath.

"'Some snoopin' sheriff, is my guess,' says Dog Langenfelder, with a ready gun.

"Orton turned and picked up a burnin' brand from the dyin' fire. He held this aloft, and they begun to look among the rocks that laid at the foot of the hill. In another minute they was all four kneelin' around Slim Jack's limp body.

"Skillet and Dog turned the slender figure over, and the light of the brand showed 'em the face of the man they had wronged so much.

"'Slim Jack Gorman, by cripes!' says Chuck, lookin' around at Little Farley Dix. 'Now I wonder what he——'

"'That's easy to guess,' says Dog Langenfelder; 'he seen our firelight, meant to see who we was, and fell and hurt himself.'

"They carried Slim Jack down to the fire, and revived him with whisky strong enough to take the hair off of a hog's back. Jack looked up, made a face, and then went to sleep; and he slept all that night and most of the next day. They treated him well, which was out of mixed fear and respect and not because they had anything of the Good Samaritan in 'em.

"THE followin' mornin' Chuck Orton and his three pals woke up to face frownin' graveyards—they thought; but it was only a bluff, in the shape of Slim Jack Gorman's two revolver barrels. Chuck and his pals reached for guns; but their holsters was empty.

"'I throwed 'em away,' says Slim Jack. "Now don't try to get promiscuous, unless you want to end your earthly careers.

"'If you men had been respectable outlaws and not low-down skunks packin' your dirty jobs off on me, I'd die before I'd do what I'm goin' to do; but you don't deserve mercy, and you won't get it. I meant to kill you all, and even cut the notches on my right-hand gun-handle in advance; but, for reasons the which and t'other of is none of your business, I've changed my mind. I'm now goin' to start with you four to Hartsville, where I'm goin' to turn you over to the law. Yes, I mean it, by cripes, and no foolishness out of you if you want to breathe the breath of life a while longer!'

"'It's reasonable to think,' sneers Chuck Orton, 'that you'll go to Hartsville with us, when you happen to be wanted by the law worse than any man of us.'

"'I know all about that,' replies Slim Jack, still with his guns leveled, 'and I've decided to risk it. Whatever falls to my lot, I'll have the pleasure of knowin' that I paid my debt to you, you skunks.' And he adds to himself, 'without violatin' a certain one of God A'mighty's Ten Commandments.'

"'Now, I say,' says Orton, 'I may be a hard guy, but I don't deserve any such a raw deal as this. You——'

"'Cut it!' Jack interrupts, risin' to his feet. 'March—get up and march—you low-down coyotes, you!'

"So Slim Jack Gorman took the four to Hartsville and turned 'em over to the sheriff, surrenderin' himself also.

"Yonder is Yellow Creek, stranger, and I'll have to talk rapid.

"Not long after Jack had surrendered, a little woman in black walked up the steps at the Governor's house, asked to see the

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State's chief executive, and was showed forthwith into the liberry. There the little woman handed the big man a petition signed by hundreds of good people, and among 'em many widows who loved Slim Jack—but maybe not in the way they would have loved a sweetheart. Then the little woman got down on her knees and begged for mercy for Jack Gorman. The Governor picked her up, like the truly fine man he is, and put her in his own chair, after which he listened to every word of the whole story.

"Just as the Hartsville judge was about to pass sentence on Slim Jack, a telegram was brought to him. It was from the State's capital city. And this was the sentence Slim Jack Gorman got:

"'We think your surrender, bringin' with you four badly wanted men as you did, has caused the balance to be heavy on your side of the scales of justice. You are hereby sentenced to serve for an indefinite period as United States Marshal, at a salary of two thousand dollars a year.'

"You see, a man of Gorman's qualifications was badly needed, and no doubt they thought Jack would do all he could as a sort of atonement—which was correct. Sue? Didn't she prove that she loved him? They're married, of course."

One Year Later

Billy Blain makes his last Appearance

by Walter Galt

MRS. WILLIAM BLAIN — she could not endure to be called Mrs. Billy — had quite a little trouble with her husband in the beginning. He kept his word faithfully, so far as leaving the ring was concerned; but he maintained that that was the full extent of his promise, and that he had given no undertaking, expressed or implied, to keep away from prize-fights. He attended every fight of any importance in a brand-new suit of full evening dress. But she weaned him of it in the end.

She took to attending female-suffrage meetings on those occasions and began to sport a badge with "Votes for Women" on it; so Billy compromised. No votes for women, and no prize-fights for their husbands; those were the terms, and they suited admirably, for from that moment Billy began to forge ahead in the new career that he had marked out for himself.

His determined little wife had put just as effective an embargo on his going to sea again, although in that matter she adopted a rather different method. She merely wept at the mention of it. So Billy, who adored her, gave up the sea, and discontinued his correspondence course in marine engineering and took a mechanical en-

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gineering and electrical course instead of it.

It was Terence O'Hanlon who secured employment for him in a big electrical machine-shop. In engineering matters, what Terence O'Hanlon said was gospel in most places, and he whom he recommended was usually hired. But it was Billy who "made good"—who put in overtime without grumbling—who gave his undivided attention always to the work in hand—who kept his fellow workmen good-tempered by dint of his own invariable good humor—and who backed up the foreman more than once when there was sudden trouble and a ready fist was needed.

And it was Mrs. Billy Blain—to give her her much-better-known title—who laid his correspondence-lessons out for him after supper every evening. It was she who spent two hours each night of complete but quite delightful martyrdom in helping him to grasp what she could never understand herself. It was Mrs. Billy who husbanded the money that Billy had fought for so valiantly in the ring; who chose the furniture for the little Harlem flat—the mission stuff picked up at auction sales, the bright-green carpet with the geometrical pattern, the magenta curtains, the oleographs, and the canary-bird that twittered in a brass cage in the parlor. And it was she who made him go to church on Sundays, and kept up the social end of things. If Billy was the sinews of the combination, hers was the master hand; and Terence O'Hanlon was guide, philosopher and friend to both of them.

FOR all that, she never quite warmed to Terence. He had much too recently been Billy's manager, and his conversation was far too reminiscent. Since Billy had left the ring, Terence had hunted far and wide for another string to his pugilistic bow, and he had dug up from the fighting-man's underworld a lightweight of more or less promise. But, as Terence himself complained:

"He's not what Billy was—not by a mile! If you don't watch him, he drinks on the sly, and if I don't keep on threatening to half-murder him he won't even try to get himself fit. He gets scared in the ring if the other man pulls faces at him; he's crooked, and he's greedy, and he's mean. Our contract calls for fifty—fifty. I never had a contract with Billy, but we never had a hard word once about money matters. This scut of a lightweight gets his fifty, and goes straight off and blows it in, and then comes back drunk and tries to borrow more; and when I refuse to loosen up, he growls about fraud. I can just about make a living with him, or I'd kick him out to starve this minute!"

It was that kind of conversation that got on Mrs. Billy's nerves. Whenever Terence O'Hanlon called, on Sunday afternoons, and laid his Derby hat precisely in the middle of the pattern on the carpet, she did her best to lead the conversation into other channels. Terence would listen with an air of forced politeness, and answer in monosyllables; and after a while Mrs. Billy would have to pause for lack of more ideas. Then Terence would pass a knotted forefinger between his collar and the back of his hairy neck, "to ease her up some," as he explained it, and cough once or twice, and make some remark about his lightweight.

It was deep calling unto deep, when that happened. Billy would spread his legs and lean forward, and his eyes would light up eagerly, and the ten-by-twelve parlor was the ring again. And Mrs. Billy could have stopped a Mississippi flood as easily as the flow of their conversation after that.

But on the other hand, she knew that Terence was her loyal friend, and Billy's. She knew well that she could trust him, and that if help were ever wanted by either of them Terence would come running with it, and would pay it out willingly, hand-over-hand, until his resources were all exhausted. He was a critical, dependable friend of a quite unusual kind.

FOR instance, though Billy had made amazing progress, he was no electrician yet. One day, though, a sudden emergency call came in for some one to go and attend to electric wiring that the man in charge of it had failed to understand. Hands were short that day, and for lack of any one better his boss sent Billy to see what he could do with it. Billy 'phoned promptly for O'Hanlon, and the old engineer came instantly.

He joined Billy where the job was, and found him all alone, scratching the back of his head and staring at the job distractedly.

"Come on, you big Mick," said Billy,

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"make yourself useful; show me how to fix this."

"Do it yourself!" said Terence. "I'm here to watch."

"But I ain't never done a job o' this sort! Leastways——"

"Leastways what?"

"Not on my own."

"Well, there's no one to get in your way now. Go ahead!"

"I dunno how. What d'you suppose I sent for you for?"

"I'm here to smoke, my son, and watch you learn! Go ahead—get busy—time's short."

"But how'm I goin' to——"

"Use your head, my son; that's what it's for. Think!"

Billy argued and pleaded, but it was no use. O'Hanlon was adamant. So Billy had to try to tackle it; and he tried as he had been used to try in the ring, when he was up against an antagonist whose style of fighting he did not know as yet. Three times O'Hanlon checked him, and made him do part of the work again, but he never once told him how do to it. He told him quickly enough when he was doing the wiring wrong, but he made him find out the right way for himself; and in less than an hour the whole thing was straightened out as it should have been.

"Now hurry back to the shop, and report, my son!" said O'Hanlon. "Tell 'em the job's finished!"

Billy went; and after a little while O'Hanlon followed him. But O'Hanlon avoided the shop and went straight into the office.

"How much are ye payin' that little fightin' man I recommended to ye?" he demanded of the manager.

The manager consulted a bookkeeper, and then a pay-sheet.

"Twenty a week," he answered.

"Then ye ought to be ashamed o' yourselves! I was just now round at Lingham's—dropped in there to have a smoke with the engineer-in-charge, and didn't find him; but I saw that kid Blain do as fine a bit of wirin' as I ever saw in my life! Couldn't have done it better myself!"

"D'you mean to say he fixed it? He came back just now and said so, but——"

"He fixed it, and he did it single-handed! Twenty a week? Why, man, that's electrician's work!"

Next pay-day Billy found his salary liberally increased. And Mrs. Billy, who collared his pay-envelope with a regularity that was praiseworthy to both of them, added a second-hand gilt mirror to the parlor furniture, and by devious cross-questioning wormed the truth out of O'Hanlon. So she had to accept him as a friend.

BUT O'Hanlon's conversation was a sore trial to her, and some of his actions were even worse. He ran in on them one Sunday afternoon in an old slouch-hat and his shirt-sleeves, and demanded that Billy go with him at once to look over a new discovery of his. He had discovered a likely-looking welter-weight at last, and he insisted that Billy put on the gloves with him that afternoon and try him out.

In vain Mrs. Billy objected, and said that it was Sunday, and reminded Billy of his sacred promise. He denied that he had promised not to put the gloves on. All, he said, that he had undertaken was not to go into the ring again and not to fight for money. This would be merely sparring, to oblige a friend. And, as for its being Sunday, he had met her half-way, hadn't he? Hadn't he been to church? Hadn't he worn a stiff collar all the morning? And a stiff shirt? And how could he go back on his friend O'Hanlon? He would go 'round with Terence whatever his wife or the neighbors or anybody said, and would lick the stuffing out of this new discovery, and be back with an extra good appetite in time for tea. And go he did.

But he did not lick the stuffing out of Mike Riley—or Jimmy Jewel, as this new discovery preferred to call himself. They boxed six rounds, and Billy did his level, unmerciful, dogged, meteoric best. And at the end of the sixth round Billy had a black eye to console him for his efforts. "Jimmy Jewel" was panting and exhausted and groggy at the knees; but he was still standing up, and still game for another round.

"He'll do, that guy will!" said Billy. "Oh, lordy, lordy, lordy; but it's good to spar again!"

"Call that sparrin', do ye, ye little firebrand? I thought ye'd punch my new discovery off the map! Sure he'll do, if only he'll keep straight. Take your gloves off, and come and help me rub him down.

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Get on that slab, you! We'll maybe make a man of you, Billy and I!"

"Not me!" said Billy laughing. "You'll have to count me out; my missus won't stand for it."

"That's the worst o' women!" grumbled O'Hanlon, bending over his man and commencing to massage him. "They're all right within their limitations, but they're too darned prejudiced! They've got no ideas o' fair play. There's no sense o' sport in 'em. They'll work 'emselves to death, nursin' a man that's got himself hurt in a fool accident, an' they'll spit on him if he gets a black eye or so in the way o' good clean sport! Will I prick that eye for you? It's swellin'."

"Guess not, thanks," said Billy. "The little missus'll do that when I get home; she'd rather! Rub them back-muscles o' his more—higher up—that's it. So long."

II

BILLY got into dreadful trouble over that black eye of his. Mrs. Billy pricked it for him, and bathed it, and poulticed it, and made more fuss over it than if it had been a broken leg; but she expostulated too. She sent for his mother-in-law, and that obese lady joined with her daughter in the business of dinning into Billy a proper sense of the vulgarity and brutality and impropriety of boxing in any shape or form, professional or otherwise.

Between his wife's tongue and her mama's—they talked at him in two different keys, from two separate angles, and along two distinct lines of argument, one tearful and the other vituperative—it was borne in upon Mr. William Blain that any sort of connection with the fighting-game had ceased to be worth while.

The two ladies stuck to their task gamely for several weeks, until the mere mention of the word fighting sickened him. In the end it was he who told O'Hanlon to cease from any reference to the ring. The Irishman knew very well indeed that Billy must have reached the limit of his endurance before he would go to that length, so his visits to the little Harlem flat grew rarer, and when he did come he talked politics, which are currently supposed by the uninitiated to be more respectable.

And then one afternoon, a week or two after Billy's final abnegation of pugilism, there came a caller on Mrs. Billy. He proved to be none other than Geoghan, the unutterable. He looked shabby and rather down-at-heel, but his sly eyes were just as calculating as ever, and his glib tongue had lost none of its plausibility. So, although he was received with suspicion and very distantly at first, he soon had Mrs. Billy listening to him; and what he had to say affected her almost to the verge of tears.

According to Geoghan, what of his present poverty and ill-luck was not Billy's fault was due entirely to O'Hanlon. Between them they had destroyed him. They had, he said, stood in with him on a scheme to lose a fight and so bring about a match with Battling Bill; and then they had double-crossed him and almost ruined him. Billy's last fight of all, he declared, had put the finish to him financially. And now that his money was all gone and his reputation practically ruined, they had consigned him to oblivion.

He hovered between vaguely hinted threats of exposing both of them to the newspapers and pleading to lend him a little money. Finally, with his customary skill, he divined the right course, and told Mrs. Billy that it was his money that had bought her furniture, his money that was in the bank, his money that was laid by for a rainy day, and that he, Geoghan, was down-at-heel because of it. And there was so much truth in his assertion that much of the money had once been his that Mrs. Billy overlooked the impudent threats that he had hinted.

AFTER a conversation that lasted half an hour, she invited him to call again the following afternoon. That evening after supper there were no engineering papers on the table. Instead of lessons, she and Billy held an argument that lasted long into the night.

"Give him money? That skunk! Listen," said Billy, "this is what the blighter done to me!" His wife's careful drilling in the art of polite speech was all forgotten when Billy grew indignant. "First of all, when I come to New York, 'e turns me down 'ard! I'd a perfectly good letter to 'im, an' 'e 'ad a chance to do the square thing; 'stead o' that 'e tells me to get a job layin' bricks or else starve. Said 'e didn't care which! What next? I breaks into the

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fightin' game, with the 'elp o' Terence, an' licks 'is man. That gives 'im a grudge against me. So 'e fixes it all up to get Terence drunk, an' Terence, when 'e's drunk, mind, agrees that I'm to lie down to Terry Tindle; it's to be a fake fight, an' Tindle's to get the decision on points. What does Geoghan do? 'E sends 'is man in with orders to knock me out! Well, Mr. Bloomin' Geoghan gets the worst end o' that too!

"Next, I signs up to fight Battlin' Bill Benson; an' Geoghan goes an' 'ires a lot o' rough-necks to throw 'alf-bricks at me—him, o' course, bettin' against me, an' not wantin' me to show up. Well, you know what 'appened; I fights the Battler with a busted ankle, and beats 'im, an' Geoghan gets the worst of it again.

"After that I signs up to fight the champion. You was on in that piece. Geoghan got me locked up, didn't 'e, an' you 'ad to come an' get me out? An' now 'e comes 'ere an' tells you I'm a wrong 'un, an' Terence is a wrong 'un, an' 'e's a poor sufferin' saint in trowsies, an'—an'—an', so 'elp me Gawd, if you don't believe him!"

"Well, you needn't drop your aitches or use bad language!" said his wife.

"——!" said Billy. "What else? All right—go on; I'll try to talk polite."

"It's true, more or less, that we've got his money, isn't it?"

"Some of it was his once, yes."

"And we're prosperous, and he's down and out, even if he is a blackguard."

"Bust his ugly face! Down an' out's where he ought to be!"

"But mightn't we lend him a little money to help him up again? He got the worst of it all, so we oughtn't to bear a grudge."

"Lend him! I like that! Fat lot of what you lend him we'll ever see again!"

"Well, call it 'give' if you like! Don't you think we ought to? It would be only like giving him some of his own money back."

"Supposin' it was the other way round," said Billy. "Supposin' you an' me an' Terence was up against it, an' you was to go to Geoghan, an' ask him for a bit of *our* money back; 'ow much d'you suppose you'd get? What d'you suppose he'd say?"

That was a facer of a question, for Mrs. Billy knew quite well what Geoghan's answer would have been under those circumstances; womanlike, though, she was soon rearmed with argument.

"Because he's mean, Billy, is no reason why we should be mean as well. I'd think much better of you if you were more generous-minded!"

"How much d'you want to give him?" demanded Billy sulkily.

"I don't know. I thought perhaps five hundred——"

"*What!* Five hundred? To him? You're crazy!"

"Oh, well, if you're going to be rude," said Mrs. Billy, "I haven't got another word to say!"

And she got up and left the room.

BUT Billy was repentant in a moment.

"Here! Come back here, little woman," he called after her. And she came back with a surprising absence of deliberation.

"I'd give you any bloomin' thing you asked for in the whole wide world, provided I had it, or could get it by 'ook or crook!"

"I know you would, Billy!"

"I don't mind givin' you five hundred; you've got it all anyhow! Take it out of the bank, an' do what you like with it! But if you're goin' to give it to that swine Geoghan, don't tell me about it, that's all!"

"Do you really mean that, Billy?"

"Of course I mean it! Only promise me this, promise it'll be the last. No more sops after this to no more Mr. Bloomin' Geoghans! 'F he gets down an' out again, 'e stays down an' out! 'E's a low-down, swindlin', lyin', good-for-nothin' bum; that's what he is, an' as for givin' 'im money, I'm—I'm surprised at yer!"

"Very well, Billy, it shall be the last, I promise. And I think five hundred's too much. I'll give him half that. That ought to be enough."

"Plenty to start him swindlin' again!" growled Billy.

The following afternoon, when Geoghan called, he was amazed at his good fortune. He insisted, with a fine parade of honesty, on calling it a temporary loan, and on giving Mrs. Billy a penciled receipt for it. But he left the house with a grin on his ugly face that boded ill for somebody. That evening he went out of his way to watch O'Hanlon, who was putting his latest acquisition through his paces in a local gymnasium. And as Geoghan watched, the

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grin grew, and his eyes sparkled. But O'Hanlon failed even to notice it. Billy was so ashamed of his own and his wife's weakness that he never mentioned the "little loan" to Terence.

III

HAVING won the welter-weight championship at the end of only six fights, and in the course of his very first attempt at management, Terence O'Hanlon was naturally enough crazy to win it again. But when Billy Blain retired from the ring immediately after winning it, there were at least a score of claimants for the title, not one of whom would consider for a moment the advantages of Terence's protecting wing.

He was regarded as an amateur. Billy Blain had won his fights in spite of him; that was everybody's verdict, and Terence's pretensions to be a real fight-manager were laughed at whenever he voiced them or tried to induce any seasoned fighter to come into his camp. So there was nothing else for it but for him to hunt for a promising beginner; and even when he found one, in the person of "Jimmy Jewel," that person's adoption by O'Hanlon was regarded by the fight fraternity as more or less proof of his unfitness.

The chief claimant for the welter-weight title now was a man named Hurley, and he was a singularly cautious person—careful with his money and not at all anxious to fight any man whom he was not certain in advance that he could beat. But even he, when Terence approached him and his manager—a man named Cohen—was too scornful of the Irishman's pretensions to take any risk from that quarter seriously. He considered any one that O'Hanlon might have in charge must be easy picking, and Cohen agreed with him.

But Terence O'Hanlon, old though he was to start out on a new career, had nevertheless, picked up quite a lot of wisdom from his experiences with Billy Blain; and part of what he had learned was the unwisdom of showing his hand too early in the course of negotiations. So, when he talked fight to Hurley and Cohen, he indulged more in generalities and less in details than he had been used to do.

"You claim you're champion, don't you?" he asked.

"Sure!" said Hurley and Cohen, both together.

"I'm game to prove it, too," added Hurley; "that's more than some are!"

"You mean cheese-champion, don't you!" sneered O'Hanlon. "Why, I've got a man that can lick you!"

"Why don't you bring him along, then?" grinned Hurley. "I'll fight him. What's his name?"

"Never mind his name. I'll bet that I can find a welter-weight to lick you!"

"I'll bet you can't!"

"Come on," said O'Hanlon, "let's bet!"

Now, O'Hanlon was dead, cold sober at the time, but he was an engineer and a pessimist by profession and education only. When this fight-hobby of his came up, he was an optimist and a born fool.

"How much d'you want to bet?" asked Hurley.

"What odds will you lay me?" asked O'Hanlon.

Hurley considered for a moment and then took his manager aside and talked with him. Neither of them cared to lay odds, but on the other hand it seemed a pity not to tempt this amateur into a glaring indiscretion.

"I'll lay you two to one," said Hurley, coming back.

"To how much?" asked O'Hanlon.

Hurley and Cohen consulted again.

"To two thousand," said Cohen presently.

"Make it three!" said O'Hanlon, and once more they retired to talk it over.

"Won't you name your man?" asked Cohen.

"Certainly not," said Terence. "My bet is that I'll produce a man to beat your man."

"All right," said Cohen, "we'll lay you six thousand to your three that you can't do it."

"Done with you," said Terence.

"Got the money ready?"

"Sure."

TERENCE went away and fetched it, and with the exception of a bare five hundred dollars it was all the money that he had in the world.

They argued for an hour or two after that, for no fight was ever staged that lasted so much as half a round that did not need more hot air than a balloon to

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get it started. In the end, they called in the proprietor of a well-known fight-hall, and he agreed to stage the thing and give them forty per cent. of the gate receipts to divide between them. That, of course, meant more argument. Hurley and Cohen demanded two thirds of the forty per cent. as their share, and O'Hanlon held out for half. They compromised at last at three-fifths and two-fifths, and it was agreed that O'Hanlon must produce his man at ten o'clock on the evening of that day three weeks. The men were to weigh in the ring, in full view of the spectators.

O'Hanlon posted his money and went off to get his man into condition for the fight. One thing pleased him; the reporters had heard of this match and had made a story of it. The fight was getting plenty of free advertising in advance and there was sure to be a good crowd to see it that would make his share of the gate receipts worth having. But the Jimmy Jewel person gave him more trouble than he had bargained for.

The youngster could use his fists, as Billy Blain had proved one memorable Sunday afternoon. He could knock the sparring-partners that O'Hanlon hired for him all round the ring, and could keep on doing it. But, if ever O'Hanlon was foolish enough to advance him a little money and take his eyes off him, Jimmy would slip away and come home the worse for liquor.

Once O'Hanlon thrashed him for it. The giant took him over his knees and whacked him as he would have done a boy, only rather harder; and after that he refused to give him so much as another nickel until after the fight was over.

"Ye can fight this one fight," he told him, "and then I'll divvy up and be done with ye!"

Jimmy Jewel grew sulky under that treatment and the enforced abstinence from drink, and O'Hanlon had to threaten another thrashing before he could get him to work hard at his training. The fellow proved to be a no-account wastrel in more ways than one, and but for having posted a forfeit of three thousand dollars in real money O'Hanlon would have washed his hands of him and kicked him into the street. The ex-engineer was a man of too much innate decency and of too hot a temper to have much patience with a creature of the Jimmy Jewel type.

THE day came when O'Hanlon had to leave him for an hour or two, to go on private business of his own, and the bruiser seized the opportunity to take a short stroll on his own account. He had no money, for O'Hanlon had seen to that, but he thought he knew where he could borrow some, and he sat down in Union Square and waited for a friend who he thought might pass. And as he waited, Geoghan spied him.

"How are you?" asked Geoghan pleasantly, taking a seat beside him.

"Who are you?" asked Jimmy Jewel surlily.

"D'you mean to say you don't know me?"

Jewel eyed him suspiciously.

"Don't know you from Adam!" he answered.

Geoghan grinned. This was better luck than he had hoped for. People who knew him, he had noticed, were generally rather chary of doing business with him, but he could generally be plausible enough to get the best of strangers.

"I'm a man," he said, "who can put something your way."

He eyed Jewel with a well-acted expression of philanthropy and patronage.

"Spill it, then!" said Jewel.

"You're fighting for O'Hanlon, aren't you?"

"Yes, —— him! I wish I could leave him flat on his ugly face!"

"Why don't you?"

"Can't afford to! Got no money!"

"How much do you stand to get, if you win this fight?"

"Five hundred."

"That all? And if you lose?"

"Nix!"

"How's that? Who gets the loser's end?"

"O'Hanlon. He claims he staked me, and that he's entitled to it."

"Feel like winning?"

"How should I know?"

Geoghan reached down into his pocket.

"See that?" he asked, holding out a hundred-dollar bill.

Jewel's eyes started out of his head.

"Put it away," he growled, "before I take it from yer!"

"When does the fight take place?" asked Geoghan.

"Evenin' of the twentieth—fourteen days from now."

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"What time?"

"Ten o'clock."

"This hundred's yours," said Geoghan, "if you're at my place on West Fourteenth Street at ten o'clock on the evening of the twentieth instead of in the fight-hall!"

Jewel looked at him in amazement.

"Here's five dollars for you now, to prove to you that I mean business!"

"But ——"

"But nothing! You do as I say, and earn the hundred. That five is extra—it don't come off the hundred."

Jewel put the five-dollar bill in his pocket.

"All right," he said, getting up. "Where's your place on Fourteenth Street?"

"Know Phil Riley's?"

"Yes."

"There, then. Ask for Mr. Hyman, and if I'm not there, wait for me."

HE LEFT Jewel then, and went to call on Cohen; and he and Cohen and Hurley discussed matters for twenty minutes or more. He had more trouble with them than he had had with Jewel, for they knew all about his recent history and his reputation. But in the end they came to terms of some kind, and Geoghan left their quarters smiling and apparently well pleased with himself.

When O'Hanlon returned that evening he found Jimmy Jewel very nearly blind drunk. He gave him a sound thrashing and questioned him for half an hour or more afterward; but he could get nothing out of him as to who had given him money, or where he had bought the drink. After that, though, he had no more trouble of any kind with Jewel. He settled down to train cheerfully and apparently in real earnest.

IV

"WHAT'S the matter, Mr. O'Hanlon?"

It was the afternoon of the twentieth, and Mrs. Billy Blain had met him rushing frantically about New York, furious and half beside himself.

"Where's Billy?"

"Working."

"Of course he is. I forgot for the moment."

"What do you want him for?" asked Mrs. Billy suspiciously.

"I want his advice, and maybe the use of his legs for an hour or two."

"What's the matter?" repeated Mrs. Billy.

She had never seen O'Hanlon so disturbed, and his present condition made her nervous.

"There's plenty the matter, but you wouldn't even sympathize, Mrs. Blain!"

"Are you in any trouble?"

"Trouble is it? I never was in worse!"

"Then, I certainly do sympathize, whatever it is! Tell me."

"You remember that new welter-weight of mine, named Jimmy Jewel—the one that blacked Billy's eye for him one Sunday afternoon?"

She nodded, and made rather a wry face; she preferred not even to talk about that incident.

"He was booked to fight to-night at ten o'clock. I've backed him to be there and win for all the coin I've got in the world practically; I stand to lose the lot if he's not there."

"Well?"

"He won't be there, that's all! He's disappeared!"

"And don't you know where he's gone?"

"What a question! If I knew that, little woman, do you suppose I'd be standing here talking to you? I'd be off to get him!"

"Do you suspect foul play?"

"I don't know. If I didn't know for a fact that he was broke, I'd swear it was that hog Geoghan again; it's just like his sneaking work."

Mrs. Billy bit her lip and avoided O'Hanlon's eyes; she knew just how far from being actually broke Geoghan was.

"I've hunted high and low for a sign of him—can't find a sign anywhere of either him or Geoghan. I sent him up to have a nap after dinner—these fighting-men are just like babies, Mrs. Blain; if you don't give them their nap in the afternoon, their nerves go jumpy—and when I went upstairs to call him at a quarter past three he'd gone! Must have slipped out of the window."

"What makes you think it might be Geoghan?" asked Mrs. Billy.

"He's the only enemy I've got that I know of, for one thing. He's the only man I know who'd play such a mean trick on me. I can't find the son of a swab anywhere.

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And I've got a hunch. Four reasons!"

And she had insisted on giving Geoghan two hundred and fifty dollars! She began to realize now why Billy had grown indignant at the mere suggestion of it.

"And must you have this particular man Jewel to-night?"

"Some one else 'ud do all right, provided I could get him! Any man that could lick Hurley 'ud do! But how in thunder am I goin' to get another man at this time o' day? Tell me that! A man's got to train for a fight, Mrs. Blain! You can't send a man in to fight ten rounds for about eight thousand dollars at a moment's notice!"

"Eight thousand dollars?"

"Yes; more than that, maybe. Six thousand, and a share of the gate-receipts!"

"And would you get all that money, if your man won?"

"I would, if Jewel won, except a few hundreds for him. But, as things are now, I stand to lose three thousand instead, besides my expenses for the last few months! I'd give any man who'd go into the ring for me to-night three thousand and my share of the gate-money! I'm a ruined man if I don't find some one, Mrs. Blain!"

"Perhaps—wouldn't—I mean, if you let that be known, don't you think that Jewel would come back on those terms?"

"How'm I to let Jewel know?"

"Billy will be home at six; he'll very likely have an idea of where to find him. I'll send him out to try."

"Thank you," said O'Hanlon simply.

"Where are you going now?"

"Back to my quarters, Mrs. Blain. There's nothing else to do but go there and wait, on the off chance of Jewel's turning up."

"Good-by, then, Mr. O'Hanlon; I'd so like to be able to help you after all your kindness!"

O'Hanlon looked after her for half a minute, and shook his head.

"A good little woman," he muttered; "but she ruined Billy!"

Then he walked back to his quarters and waited there, pacing up and down in frantic rage and distress and mortification.

IT WAS half-past six when Billy came to him. He had come hurrying down from Harlem, with the marks of his day's work still on him.

"Evening, Terence," he said quite casually. "The missus told me I was wanted here."

"I don't want ye here, sonny. I want ye to help me find my man Jewel!"

"Him? Bah! He's dead drunk somewhere by this time! I'll bet it's that swine Geoghan again!"

"So'll I! He's got the better of me this time, by the look of it!"

"Aw, I dunno! I ain't so sure. I'm feelin' pretty fairly fit."

"How d'ye mean?"

"The missus shoved me out o' the house by the shoulders, soon as I came in, an' told me to come an' fight for you."

O'Hanlon dropped his jaw and stared at him, unable to believe his ears.

"Sonny," he said; "are ye joking?"

"No; and nor's the missus; she's crying!"

"And she sent ye?"

"Why not? D'ye think either of us would leave you in a hole?"

"But—but, can ye make the weight?"

"Easy! By three pounds or more!"

"And—and ye'll really go into the ring to-night?"

"Sure; glad to."

"Halves, then, sonny. Fifty—fifty."

"Nothing doing along that line, Terence. The missus made me swear I wouldn't take a cent! She tied another string to it, though."

"Out with it, then. I'll agree to anything she says!"

"It's none o' my doing, you understand? I'd ha' come without a bargain of any kind."

"Yes, yes; go on! What is it?"

"Win or lose to-night, you've got to quit the fight-game for keeps afterward!"

"Done with you!" said Terence. "Put it here. Fightin's the rottenest business in the world, and I'm glad to be through with it!"

"All right," said Billy; "that settles it, then! I've brought my trunks along in that grip."

"But, can ye do it, sonny? Ye haven't trained for a year!"

"Dunno," said Billy. "I can try, though. I've been workin' pretty hard all the year and I haven't smoked or touched booze. Muscles as hard as iron, too; feel 'em."

"Sonny, did I say once that women had no sportin' instincts? I lied! They're better men than we are! We'll win to-night; you an' me against the rest! It was

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always that way, and we always won. We're goin' to win again!"

"Don't you be too jolly cock-sure!" said Billy. "I'm tired, Terence; I've worked hard all day, and my back-muscles ache with the bendin' over."

"Then lie down there while I rub 'em. I'll fix 'em for ye. Lordy, what luck! And I said she was no sport. Go on, strip, ye little runt, and lie down where I can get my hands on ye. Quit the fightin'-game? Won't I! I'm sick to the very marrow of me of every single son-of-a-swab that follows it for a living, meself included!"

"Who've I got to fight?" asked Billy, grunting under the pressure of O'Hanlon's hands.

The question was quite an afterthought.

"Hurley—Cohen's man."

"——!" said Billy. "He can use 'em, that guy can! Rub, Terence! Rub, you old son-of-a-gun, I'll need it!"

"All right, ye little runt, I'll rub ye! So she sent ye down to help O'Hanlon, did she? Well, I'm ——!"

V

IT HAD been no secret, of course, in the fight-world that O'Hanlon's "unknown" was Jimmy Jewel. The day following the agreement to stage the fight, Cohen, Hurley's manager, had started sleuthing on his own account; and since Terence trained his man in the heart of New York City, there was very little difficulty in laying bare his secrets.

For press-agent and advertising purposes, Cohen told what he discovered to the sporting-writers and they took the public into the "secret." Scarcely a day passed but saw some half-humorous reference on a sporting page to the "unknown" Jimmy Jewel; cartoons of him, hidden behind a mask and with a skull and cross-bones on his chest, were featured in some of the evening editions, and there was so much mock-mystery made about him that the curiosity of the public was thoroughly aroused, and when the evening of the twentieth came there was almost a record crowd clamoring for admission to see the fight.

When Hurley stepped into the ring, he was greeted with more or less subdued applause; the public knew him, and thought only moderately well of him; the "unknown" was the man they had come to see, and they waited in restless silence to give him a mock ovation the moment that he showed himself.

O'Hanlon walked up the aisle first, and took no more notice of the ribald remarks that were howled at him than if they had been waves pounding on the steel wall of his engine-room. But when he came in alone, the men in Hurley's corner glanced at one another and grinned delightedly. Geoghan had been true to his word after all! The unknown had kept away. They would lose their share of the gate-receipts, but O'Hanlon's three thousand dollars were theirs!

Terence leaned over the announcer and whispered to him; and the announcer climbed into the ring and held his right hand up for silence.

"Gentlemen!" he bawled, at the top of his stentorian voice, "the principals in the main bout this evening are—Phil Hurley, of Baltimore and now of New York, claimant of the welter-weight championship title—and—Mr. Terence O'Hanlon's unknown. The conditions call for ten rounds under the Marquis of Queensberry rules, and both men will weigh in in the ring, in full view of the spectators!"

He paused for a moment, to regain his breath, and the hum of conversation began again. But he held up his hand again, and the talking ceased instantly.

"Gentlemen," he continued, "the unknown is—Mr. Billy Blain of New York—well-known to all of you as the unbeaten welter-weight champion, who retired a little more than a year ago! This is positively his last appearance in the ring—and the welter-weight title—gentlemen—is—consequently—at stake—this evening!"

The last word was drowned in a roar of delight, as Billy entered and ran lightly up the aisle in fighting kit. The crowd was getting more than it had bargained for, so, although Billy had not been in the fight-game in New York long enough to become really popular with the crowd, they gave him a regular champion's ovation.

WHILE the crowd was thundering its welcome, Geoghan slipped into the hall to talk to Cohen, Hurley's manager. He imagined that the roar was one of discontent because there was no

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fight, and he came to reassure Cohen of Jewel's safety 'round at Riley's. Cohen looked once at him, and his lip curled unpleasantly; then he nudged a burly ex-bruiser who was at his elbow.

"Soak him!" he ordered. "Throw him out!"

The bruiser obeyed orders. He was a heavy-weight and Geoghan was like an infant in his arms. Billy stood up to watch, and O'Hanlon climbed up beside the ropes to see it too; the delight of both of them was obvious, and the crowd caught on.

"Fake!" they roared in unison. "Fake!"

O'Hanlon stepped down, and once more whispered to the official announcer; and once more that individual stepped into the ring and held his hand up.

"Gentlemen," he bellowed, "this is no fake! But a fake has been attempted—by an outside party. The party is now outside. You all saw him go!"

A roar of laughter greeted that sally and the crowd began to grow good-humored again.

"The unknown," bellowed the announcer, "was a man known as Jimmy Jewel. He disappeared—this afternoon—and the champion—Mr. Blain here—consented—to take his place—rather than allow his friend and one-time manager—to lose his forfeit! Gentlemen, this is a very sporty act—on the part of—Mr. Billy Blain!"

There were thunders of applause, that lasted nearly five minutes; but the annoucer had not finished yet, and he waited until the noise had died down before he continued.

"Gentlemen," he shouted. "Mr. Blain enters the ring—untrained! He will, however, do his best. The principals will now weigh in."

To the accompaniment of applause that surpassed almost anything even in the history of the ring, Billy and Hurley took their turns on the scales, that had been hoisted over the ropes. The ceremony was quickly over, for both men were considerably below the weight. Seeing how much time had been consumed already over the preliminaries, the referee made haste to get the fight started. There was another outburst of applause, though, when the two men stood and faced each other in the middle of the ring, and they had to wait there nearly five minutes before the referee could make himself heard. Then he took a chance at it, and started them.

"TAKE it to him, Phil! Take it to him!" yelled Hurley's seconds, as Billy led off with a rush and Hurley covered.

"Steady, Billy!" called O'Hanlon from the other corner.

Each man seemed to be fighting the wrong way. According to the ethics of the game, Billy, who was untrained, should have saved his wind and fought slow, while Hurley should have rushed him. But fighting a champion is a different matter altogether from fighting a beginner. Hurley was nervous and inclined to be over-cautious. And, once he was in the ring, Billy never would listen to O'Hanlon anyhow.

The first round was a hammer-on-anvil one—fiery activity on Billy's part—savage, sudden, snappy punches, most of which got home; and sulky defense on the part of Hurley. Twice Billy drew blood, and twice he had Hurley up against the ropes, but the forced speed began to tell on him, and he was panting when he trotted to his corner at the call of time.

"Go slow, sonny," counseled O'Hanlon. "This guy's fit, and you're not. He'll wear you down, if you're not careful, and then hand you a sleep-punch!"

"Yah! Look at the fat on him!" yelled Hurley's seconds, who had been quick to note Billy's labored breathing.

He had no fat on him, and they knew it; but the accusation was likely to worry him a little.

"They can't come back!" called Cohen. "They never come back! Your man's beaten, O'Hanlon!"

Billy sat still and said nothing.

"Time!" said the referee, and the two men ran to the center again.

This time Hurley changed his tactics. Evidently his seconds had convinced him that Billy's weak point was his wind, for he rushed things from the start, leading off with a tremendous left swing, and following it up with sharp, snappy, short-arm jabs delivered in quick succession for the stomach. Billy stood up to him, and gave him back slam for slam. The fans howled delight, while the two men stood toe to toe and rained blows on one another. They hardly moved their feet at all, but simply punched and punched and tried to beat one another to a standstill.

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Then suddenly Billy ducked and sprang away, and it became evident that the exertion had told as much on Hurley as it had on him. He leaped round Hurley, giving an exhibition of his old-time amazing foot-work. The round ended with a display of pyrotechnic sparring by Billy, and one strong, well-aimed punch that got home in the pit of Hurley's stomach.

But Billy was more blown than ever when he reached his corner, and while the old ship's steward flapped the towel over him O'Hanlon eyed the other man uneasily. He seemed to have been dazed by Billy's foot-work, but he had not been hurt much, and one minute was quite sufficient for him to get his senses back. His seconds, too, were talking to him earnestly, and it was quite probable that he would come up for the next round with a new card up his sleeve.

"Why don't you stall the next three rounds, sonny?" asked O'Hanlon. "You can spar better than he can; let him tire himself out on you!"

"Stall be ——!" said Billy.

And that was all that he did say.

AT THE call of time Billy ran lightly to the center, but Hurley walked there. Hurley stood on the strict defensive, and replied to Billy's overtures with a rigidly extended left that kept him at a distance. Round and round the ring went Hurley, backward, guarding and blocking, and keeping always out of reach. And almost until the round was finished Billy followed him, sparring his utmost, and trying to force an opening.

"Now!" yelled one of Hurley's seconds suddenly.

Hurley's guard opened up suddenly, just as Billy was recovering from a swing. Hurley swung and slipped and stumbled. Out shot Billy's right, but he checked it, and missed.

"Time!" said the referee.

"What did you miss that for?" asked O'Hanlon gloomily.

"He'd one knee on the floor, bonehead! That's why! They'd have claimed a foul! Didn't you never see that trick pulled before? Gimme a suck at that bottle!"

Billy got even for the trick in the very first second of the round that followed; he landed with his full strength and weight on Hurley's teeth, and followed it with his old favorite left-right-left to the chest and stomach before Hurley could recover. Then Hurley covered up, and stalled, and began to clinch. Billy, thinking he had him at his mercy, cut loose and slammed a little wildly, trying for a knock-out; but Hurley, boxing more cleverly than he had ever done in his life before, hung on, and covered, and blocked, and clinched again, and played for safety.

Just before the call of time, though, it was Hurley who cut loose, and ducked one of Billy's swings, and landed with all his might on the point of Billy's jaw. Down went Billy, and the referee began to count.

"He's out!" roared the fans. "The champion's out!"

"Six . . . seven . . . eight . . . " counted the referee.

"*Bing!*" went the gong.

The call of time had saved him, and a moment later Billy rose and staggered to his corner.

O'Hanlon and the steward worked over him like men possessed.

"Hang on, sonny! Hang on for the love o' Mike! You've got to clinch this time, an' stall! D'ye hear me?"

But Billy answered nothing. He sat still with his muscles all relaxed and breathing deeply. He was thinking of those that counted on him—his wife, who had sent him on a forlorn hope to help O'Hanlon, and Terence himself, who stood to be ruined unless he won. He hardly heard what O'Hanlon said; he was too busy with his own thoughts.

He walked very slowly to the center when time was called, but there was a gleam in his eye that told of desperation, and a slight crouch in his gait that a more experienced man then Hurley would have suspected on the instant. Billy was evidently too far gone to spar much, and Hurley rushed him. He came like a whirlwind, and swung for the jaw again with all his might. Billy ducked and side-stepped, and his right hooked into Hurley's stomach as he passed him with a shock that brought him up all standing.

Now it was Billy's turn to flash. He summoned up every last lingering ounce of fire there was in him, landed his left on Hurley's ear with a thud that brought him half round toward him, crouched, straightened suddenly, and *thwack!* It was the solar-plexus punch, with all the strength

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and desperation and skill of a nearly beaten champion behind it. *Thud!* went Hurley to the floor.

"Stand back!" said the referee.

But Billy scarcely heard him. He stood with his arms down by his side and stared about him blankly.

"Eight—nine—ten!" counted the referee. "He's out!"

He laid his hand on Billy's shoulder. And even with that light touch Billy's knees gave way, and he fell prostrate and unconscious on the top of Hurley!

"Gentlemen!" shouted the announcer, climbing into the ring again. "The welter-weight championship remains with Mr. Billy Blain!"

VI

"HOW is he, Mrs. Blain?" asked Terence, treading like an elephant along the passageway under the delusion that he was creeping stealthily.

"He's much better this morning."

"Can I see him?"

"Not till the doctor's been."

"Mrs. Billy, listen."

"Mrs. Blain, please."

"Mrs. Blain, then. Why don't ye let him take half of what I made last night? I drew down over eight thousand; half of it's his by rights."

"No, thank you, Mr. O'Hanlon. I don't want him to touch it, and I'm sure he won't break his promise to me."

"Well, listen; I'm quitting the fight-game too. He made me promise I would before he went into the ring last night!"

"I made that condition!" said Mrs. Billy primly.

"So the little runt explained. Now, I can't do nothing; it 'ud kill me. There's a little business I could buy, 'way up in the Bronx, a nice little machine-shop for doin' general electrical repairs, an' that sort o' thing; it's in good going order, and I'm thinking of buying it. Can't Billy come in, on half shares?"

"That you, Terence?" said a voice from a room at the end of the passage. "Come in, you old Mick! I heard you."

"Did ye hear what I asked your missus?"

"You bet I did! I'm on."

"Billy, you're not!"

"Maud," said Billy, "this is where you take a back seat. Me an' Terence won eight thousand last night, countin' his own money that he put up. We've got three thousand, haven't we?"

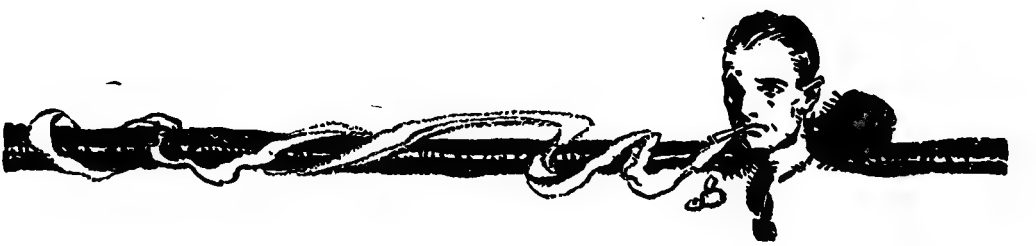
"Yes," said Mrs. Billy.

"Well, we put out three thousand to O'Hanlon's eight, an' him an' me's half partners from this day on, d'ye hear?"

"I hear!" said Mrs. Billy.

"Then give Terence the three thousand. And Terence, you beat it, and go an' buy that business. And, say, if you see that swab Geoghan anywhere about, kick him into the Bronx river!"

"No chance o' seein' him!" said Terence. "He got locked up late last night for forgery or something. They say he'll get seven years!"



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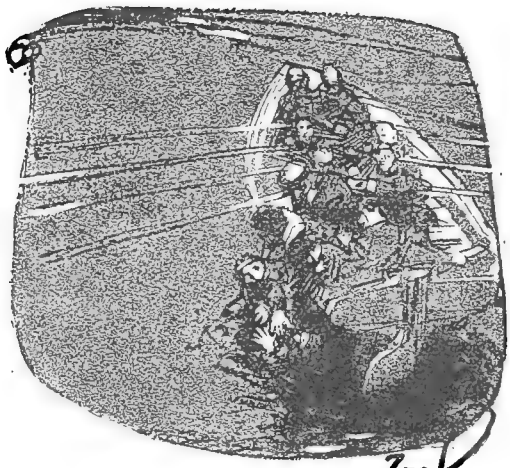

The Odds Against

by Charles Wesley Sanders

CAPTAIN MOWBRY put his lips to Gray's ear.

"We'll go now," the Captain said. "We're the last."

Gray nodded. He had, of course, read stories of captains who stayed with their boats in times of peril till everybody else had left them; but he had now witnessed such an act in real life and he was filled with admiration. He had remained with the Captain when he might have been one of the first to go, though he bitterly knew there was no heroism in that. He simply had not cared whether he went down with the boat or whether he was at length saved. He had got a few moments of exhilaration out of taking his chances.

On hands and knees they made their way aft to where the last of the small boats should have been bobbing on the sea with a handful of sailors in it. Mowbry looked down at the boiling water.

"She's gone," he said calmly, again with his lips at Gray's ear. "We waited too long."

Gray looked at the man at his side. Doubtless life was sweet to the Captain. This was an extremity for him. Gray put his own lips to the Captain's ear.

"I'm sorry," he shouted.

The Captain's only response was a shrug of the shoulders. Once more he dropped to his hands and knees and Gray followed him. When they came amidships they wrenched a hatch loose, Mowbry indicating by motions what was necessary; and they dragged the hatch aft and prepared to drop it overboard.

"Jump as soon as it hits the water, and grab it," the Captain said.

The *Mallard* was soon to take her death plunge. For three hours, or since shortly after midnight, the storm had worked its will with her. She was only a tub, but she had fought bravely as long as the breath of life was in her. But that breath was now gone. Her engines had been dead for an hour, and her rudder-gear was a tangled wreck. Her crew was somewhere on the bosom of the angry lake. Only these two men remained.

The boat was one of a fleet which Gray practically owned. He had appeared at an Ohio port which the *Mallard* had to touch, had introduced himself to Mowbry, presenting proper credentials, and had started for Duluth on the boat. The two men, till to-night, had not exchanged half a dozen sentences. Gray had hung moodily over the rail. Mowbry had gone about his duties. It was gossip among the crew that Gray had something on his mind. They had a notion that the troubles that come to the extremely rich had in some shape come to him. Some of them hoped so.

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GRAY had not known that a blow had come up till he had been almost pitched from his berth. While he was slipping into his clothing, he had felt shock after shock as the old craft rode the walls of water and then slammed herself down to the momentarily even sea between —a floor which was hard as bed-rock. The Captain had met him at the cabin-door and had told him that the first boat was ready.

"Do you go in that?" Gray had asked.

"I stay till the last," Mowbry had answered, with a little lift of his eyebrows.

"I stay with you," Gray had said.

If he had expected argument or an attempt to persuade, he was disappointed. Mowbry went about his business, and Gray followed him.

They sent the hatch over the stern, and Gray poised on the swaying rail and followed it. Mowbry waited a moment and saw him seize the hatch and cling to it. Then Mowbry leaped. At the same instant the hatch was sucked toward the boat. Mowbry struck it with stunning impact, and tumbled into the water. Gray clutched him and drew him to the hatch. One man on each side of the frail support, they paddled away from the boat.

For a little way they went in silence. The black bank of clouds in the east was shot with gray; there was a glimmer of light on the angry waters. The wind shuddered and paused in its race, but the lull came too late for the *Mallard*. She broke in two in the middle, and together the two pieces settled to the bottom. In ten minutes the men were alone, clinging to the hatch. By now they could dimly see each other's faces. Gray noticed that Mowbry's face was like chalk and that there were great, blue circles under his eyes.

"How far to land?" Gray asked.

"About four miles."

"Think we'll make it?"

Mowbry's face was suddenly contorted. He closed his eyes.

"What did you say?" he asked presently.

But another question, much more important, had come to Gray.

"Married?"

"Oh, yes," the Captain said. "Got a baby a year old. You?"

"Yes."

The word came slowly and without show of interest from Gray's lips.

"That's the hell of it," Mowbry said slowly. "The women."

Among his friends Gray was known as a reserved man; he had few real friends and no confidants. But now he said,

"My wife won't care. She's going to sue me for divorce. We've separated."

Mowbry turned curious, pain-filled eyes on him.

"You love her?" he asked.

Before Gray could answer, the board to which he was clinging became loosened from the crosspiece. Gray was nearly swept away with it, but he managed to seize another part of the hatch.

"Oh!" Mowbry cried, and his eyes closed again.

"What's the matter?" Gray shouted.

"This thing is breaking up," Mowbry said. "Can you swim?"

"Like a fish. You?"

"Yes—ordinarily."

Gray looked across the frail support at the Captain. Deep lines had come between the Captain's eyes now.

"What is it?" Gray asked.

Mowbry only looked at him. Gray repeated the question.

"I broke my leg when I jumped," the Captain said at last.

AS HE uttered the words the board to which he was clinging was torn from its fastening. The Captain's white face showed for a moment against the blue-black of the water and he began to go down. Gray released his hold and the hatch was whirled away from him. Mowbry's face appeared, half submerged. Gray went under him and came up, with the maimed man resting on his chest. Mowbry spat out a mouthful of water.

"Let me go," he said.

"I will not."

"Man, you can't make it for both of us. Think of your wife."

In his pain the Captain seemed to have forgotten what Gray had confided to him.

"I am thinking of her," Gray laughed bitterly. "I'm thinking how easy it will make it for her if I go down."

He could feel the muscles of the Captain's arms harden. The Captain was lean and sinewy, and Gray supposed he was very strong. He believed he was about to try to free himself, so that he might go down to a brave man's death and leave

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Gray to fight a battle that he would have a chance to win.

"Listen to me a minute," Gray said harshly.

The corded muscles relaxed.

"I can make it," Gray said. "I've got medals for swimming. I've done nothing all my life but play golf and drive horses and automobiles. I've never taken a drink or smoked a cigarette. I'm fit, man; it's a good sporting proposition! Let me try it. If I go down, what's the odds?"

The muscles in the Captain's arms tightened. Gray had a quick notion that the latter thought he was a liar. The Captain tried to turn over, but Gray held him as in a vise.

"Don't you try it," he warned.

But Mowbry jerked one arm loose and raised it. Gray seized it and bent it back. Then his free hand crept to the Captain's throat. Mowbry struggled for a moment, but the pain in his leg and the lack of breath were too much for him. He fainted. Gray pulled him farther up across his chest. He tried to make the broken leg easier, but, do his best, he could not keep it from dangling helplessly, the running waters turning and twisting it in a way that must have been agony to the Captain before the merciful darkness came.

WITH the dawn, as is so often the case, the storm blew itself out. The lake danced for a while angrily, and then relapsed into long, unbroken swells, which made swimming easy.

The cloud bank in the east broke, and the sunlight of an August morning filtered down upon the lake. The swells caught the light, and they were turned to crimson and orange and pink.

"I do believe I'll make it," Gray said to himself. "It'll be great business if I do." He grinned. "Wonder what Mona'd say if she knew I was doing the hero act." He shifted his burden and swam slowly on, propelling himself with his legs and his one free arm. "Wonder if Mona would care if I did go to the bottom. It'd jar her at least. Getting a divorce is one thing; burying the husband of your youth is another. She'd have to remember how it was at the beginning."

He got some satisfaction out of this for a while. Then he thought of Mowbry's wife and child.

"I suppose it would break *her* heart," he mused. "I'll bet they're so close they're like one person. How in the devil did it happen that Mona and I—oh, well, it did happen!"

The arm with which he was supporting Mowbry was getting numb. He shifted his burden and swam a while with his other arm. Despite the great strength of his apparently slight frame, despite his unusual powers as a swimmer, he was growing tired.

"I suppose the odds are ten to one against," he murmured.

He tried to raise his head a little in an effort to catch a glimpse of a possible shore line, but he could see nothing but the broad expanse of the lake, almost quiet now and turning blue as the sun rose and the light refraction ceased.

The Captain stirred in his arms.

"Are you awake?" Gray asked.

The Captain cleared his throat.

"Please don't kick up any more fuss," Gray said gently. "What's the use? You're about all in as it is. I'm not in the least tired."

"How long since I—fainted?" Mowbry asked.

"Lord, I can't tell you. Seems like a long time. I've been swimming steadily though slowly. Perhaps you can see something if you raise your head."

Mowbry raised his head and then he relaxed against Gray with a groan.

"Leg hurts, eh?" Gray asked sympathetically. "See anything?"

"I can see the shore-line," Mowbry whispered.

"Good!" Gray cried. "How far is it?"

"Two miles. Say, let me slip off from you for a while. You can hold to my shoulder and I can swim with my arms. That will give you a chance to get your breath."

"Will you be good?" Gray asked.

"Honest!" the Captain swore. "I'll help you to put this over, honest!"

Gray slipped him into the water, and the Captain rolled to his stomach with a moan.

"Where is it broken?" Gray asked.

"Just above the ankle. It's feeling better. The water makes it numb, so I can't feel that grinding so much."

"You're a liar," said Gray to himself.

They swam in silence for ten minutes. Then Mowbry turned an agonized face to the other man.

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"Pardner," he whispered, "I can't go any farther. I said I'd be good, but please let me slip under. I don't want to drag a square man like you down with me."

"How about your wife and child?" Gray asked.

Mowbry's mouth was twisted. When he straightened it his teeth grated against each other the width of his jaw, it seemed.

"Come on back here," Gray said, and he drew the Captain toward him.

The Captain lay with closed eyes for a while, and then he asked:

"How do you feel? Getting weak?"

"Yes, a little," Gray said honestly. "I wish a boat would come along."

"Make a bargain with me," Mowbry pleaded. "If you feel I'm getting too heavy, just tell me so's I'll have a minute to myself and then let me slip."

"I will not," said Gray. "I've made a bet with myself that I'll get you ashore. If I don't, I'll never know I lost the bet." And to himself he added, "And I won't care much whether I win or lose."

MOWBRY had been lifting his head from time to time to look for the shore-line, and on one of these occasions he discovered coming toward them the boat which had been going up and down the lake for the last hour looking for them or signs of the wreck.

"Can you yell?" he asked Gray. "I can't."

"Why?" Gray asked. "Not much, I guess. I'm about all in."

"There's a row-boat about a quarter of a mile nor'east of us. If you can yell a little you can make 'em hear."

"Could you slide off me for a minute?" Gray asked.

Mowbry shut his teeth and slipped into the water, Gray clinging to him. Then Gray filled his lungs and emitted a yell that might have been heard ten feet away. He drew Mowbry back to him.

"No use," he said. "I'm done. What's the matter?"

Mowbry made no answer. The pain in his leg, made sharp by Gray's quick movement, had caused him to faint again.

"That's a godsend to you, old man," Gray whispered. "You'll go down among the fishes, and you'll never know a thing about it. Mona! Good-by!"

As the light went from his eyes he clutched Mowbry with the iron clutch that comes to drowning men. He was in darkness, with horrid noises in his ears. Oh for one deep breath of air! He tried to take it and his lungs were filled with water. He had a sense of buoyant rising, however, and he felt air on his face. Then, as if from afar, there was a shout, and half a dozen hands seized him. He released Mowbry and he was drawn into a boat. He opened his eyes, blinking, and recognized members of the crew of the *Mallard*. They were drawing Mowbry into the boat.

"Easy on him," Gray said. "He's got a broken leg."

He slipped to the bottom of the boat and lay still. He almost choked on the brandy which they forced between his teeth, and he had a sense of motion. That was all.

II

GRAY and the wife whose name had been on his lips in that last awful moment met at the turning of a country road. She gazed at him with wide, lovely eyes for a moment, and then she swayed and her lids wavered down. Gray ran to her and caught her just as she was about to slip to the dusty road. He carried her to the grassy roadside. She found herself supported by his arm when she regained consciousness. She lifted her head and looked at him in silence for a long time.

"You're alive, Dan?" she asked.

"I think so," he said grimly. "How did you know I was here?"

"I didn't know you were here. I thought you were dead." Her tone was low and colorless. "The papers said you had been lost in one of your boats."

"We were as good as lost the first morning," he said. "The Captain and I were the last to leave the boat. He had a broken leg. We clung to a hatch for a time, but it was broken up. Then I swam with him across my breast."

"You saved his life?" she asked, looking at him curiously.

"So he says," he replied, appearing to take a deep pleasure in letting her know that he could rise to the heights of heroism.

"You imperiled your own life doing it?" she asked.

"Pshaw," he broke out. "Don't try to make a brave man out of me. In ordinary

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circumstances, I'd have been scared to death. But I was bitter. What did it matter whether I went to the bottom or not? And he had a wife—a wife and a child. They're here now—up at the farmhouse. She's a fine woman. It was inspiring to see how she started right in at once to take care of him. She sleeps in a chair at his bedside, and in the morning she's as clear-eyed and as ready for the day as if she had—well, as if she had merely danced all night."

That had been the dispute between them—her love of dancing and bridge and his dislike of those. He wanted the open places.

She looked straight ahead of her at the lake, blue and serene as far as her eyes could reach. She was in no mood for recriminations.

He saw that her dainty low shoes were dusty and that the bottom of her white dress was stained with grass and dirt.

"How did you get here?" he asked, somewhat roughly.

"I walked," she said quietly. "I couldn't get any one in the village to bring me. They were all too busy. I was in New York when I read about the wreck and your death. I came home at once. A later paper I bought on the train made the bare statement that the Captain had been rescued. It said he was probably the last man that had spoken to you. As soon as I learned where he was, I went to the station by myself and came here. I thought he might have some word you had left for me—or something of yours. I didn't know. It was horrible when I read the news first and thought you were dead. I felt as if I had killed you. Then I understood what a mistake I had made."

Gray rose and helped her to her feet. He could not adjust himself to her change of mood, and he was not sure that he could rely upon it.

"Do you want to go to the farmhouse and rest a while?" he asked. "Then we can make arrangements to get back to town. I'd better let people know that I'm still alive."

THEY went slowly down the road. She was extremely weary now, he saw, and he accommodated his pace to hers.

"I'd like to see the man you rescued," she said, in a curious voice, as they went up the cinder-path to the front door.

Inside, Gray knocked on a door that led from the hall in the front of the house. He was bidden to enter. The Captain lay propped up in bed a little. Mrs. Mowbry reclined in a rocking-chair, fast asleep. Gray had a feeling that it might easily have been that there would be little more sleep or rest for her for many weary nights and days.

And just at that moment the light broke for Gray. He perceived that the bitterness he had felt out there on the lake was here a loathsome thing. It had no chance to catch its sickened breath. For he had saved a man—saved a man! And for what? Why, to bring him back to a woman, of course. And somehow a woman had been brought back to himself.

For a moment the bed with Mowbry on it swam in a mist. The mist cleared. He took Mona's hand in his and led her up to the Captain.

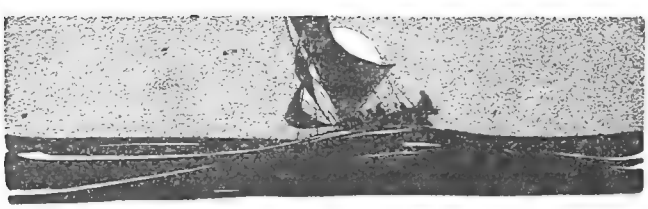
"This is my wife," he said, and his voice vibrated on the last word.

The Captain regarded them with his quizzical eyes, around which wind and wave had brought many little wrinkles. At last he turned to Gray.

"The more I think about our experiences out there on the lake the funnier they get," he said. "Now, I dreamed—I dreamed——"

"Yes; you dreamed a lot of things," Gray said.

The two men looked steadily into each other's eyes; and then Gray's words, spoken when the nearness of death had broken down his reserve, were as if they had never been uttered.



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Orders Gray

A Sir John Hawkwood Story

By Marion Polk Angellotti

IT IS well said that a man knows little of what the future holds in store for him. We may plan our lives as carefully as we choose, and think that we have the threads of fate gathered safely in our hands—for all that, fortune's wheel will find some way to deal us a surprise which will make us look blanker than men care to do. This lesson I learned long since by dint of watching rulers toppled off their thrones in a night, adventurers set up in their places, and great lords turned to beggars by the ravaging of their lands; yes, and the change in my own person of a tanner's apprentice to the greatest general of the times.

Nevertheless, I had still something left to learn of fate and its ways, for had any one gifted with second sight informed me that I would yet find myself in the gray habit of a Franciscan friar I would certainly have paid the prophecy no greater tribute than an unbelieving laugh and shrug. Yet it was destined to be, for all that, and it was in this fashion the matter came about.

Doubtless you have often heard, like all the rest of the world hereabouts, the tale of the Fighting Prior who ruled the Monastero della Croce near Padua, and of how in a single night this worthy made himself a terror to evil-doers. You may even have seen him; and in that case I will swear you felt some wonder on perceiving that so warlike a churchman could appear so meek, so mild, and so retiring, more like a benign mouse, in fact, than anything else.

I dare say you ended with the reflection that one can not judge from appearances in matters like these, and that is a true word enough, for the greatest bully I ever knew was a lame, soft-mannered little man with a lisp, while one of the best swordsmen—but that has nothing to do with the Fighting Prior.

There is no reason why I should not give you the truth of the affair now, for the good father died some time since, and I fancy his little monastery exists no more. It had been a splendid place once, and famous in the annals of Padua, but in one way and another it lost its lands and dignities, and the number of the friars thinned, so that it was in a sad condition on a certain stormy Winter night when I halted there with a dozen of my troopers.

Its appearance, as revealed to me by a lightning-flash, was anything but inviting, and I had no great desire to enter; but neither was I anxious to go on in the wind and rain, and since Padua lay some three hours to the westward and there was no very near refuge that I could call to mind, I saw nothing for it but to make the best of a bad business.

"We will lie here till dawn," said I across my shoulder to my troopers, and from the chorus of heartfelt rejoicing that rose among them I gathered they much preferred a ruined lodging to none at all.

WE WERE fated to get as strange a reception as ever I had in my life. On my last word I had pounded with my sword-hilt on the gate of the monastery, making it creak and rattle as if about to fall in before my eyes; and immediately there rose within a babel of frightened voices and a running of feet, followed by a sepulchral silence. Plainly my advent

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and the mode in which I announced it had terrified the good brothers half out of their wits, and I wondered why, since it was only nine by the clock and certainly no unreasonable hour for wayfarers to seek shelter.

After a lengthy pause, through which we sat shivering in the wind, I became aware that some one was breathing noisily on the other side of the gate; but save for this one sound the silence remained unbroken, and if any preparations were being made to admit us, I can only say that they entirely escaped me.

"Heaven pity us!" I cried, out of patience with so much foolery. "Do you think I have come to sack the house, that you keep me freezing before a gate which I could demolish, if I desired it, by a single hearty blow?"

For some reason this protest, while not exactly pacific, seemed to hearten them a trifle. A muffled conference went on, then a wicket in the gate was charily opened a mere crack, and in the aperture thus formed was revealed to me the pallid face of a lay brother, who, if I had any skill in reading features, had very recently come near to giving up the ghost for pure fright.

"God save you, signor!" said he, in a hollow voice which I thought held a good deal less concern for my welfare than for his own. "What is it you desire?"

"What should I desire but lodging for myself and my men? Do you think I would stop on a night like this to change greetings with you?" I cried, pardonably annoyed; for the chill of the weather was creeping into my very bones. "Listen, my friend—my name is John Hawkwood, and if you are accustomed to keep your ears open you doubtless know I am in the service of your Duke. Moreover, for what I eat I am ready to pay. Now, will you open your gate, or must I choose between a forced entrance and a night in the storm?"

To my mystification, the announcement of my name seemed to work like any charm. Those within exclaimed in obvious relief, the gate was flung wide, and our little troop, filing through it, entered a ruined but very beautiful cloister of white marble, with a great well in the center.

Here were grouped the inhabitants of the monastery to the last man, holding up torches to stare at me in what would, had I been a timid soul, have proved a somewhat disconcerting fashion; and well to the front of them stood the dignitary of whom soldiers even now speak with reverence as the Fighting Prior. You may trust me when I say that none would have chosen that moment to bestow the title on him, for he was all of a tremble, and his voice went from high to low as he bestowed on me what he evidently meant for a cordial greeting.

"Welcome, Sir John Hawkwood! Your pardon for our tardiness; we look for a raid every night, and must needs be cautious. It gives me joy to have you for my guest," he exclaimed, as I dismounted.

"Faith, I should never have suspected it, had you not told me as much," I answered, somewhat dryly, for the whole affair seemed to me a senseless one, and I was still further irritated by seeing the lay brother swing the gate hastily shut after the last of my men, as if believing that we brought some pestilence in our train. "What under heaven menaces you, that my peaceful coming puts everything in a flutter like this? A raid, did you say? From the look of your monastery I would have thought you might well afford to wish thieves joy of any booty they could find."

THE remark was not overcivil, I must confess—cold and hunger must stand my excuse for the making of it—and I felt ashamed of my ill temper when I saw the good Prior draw himself up with an air of dignity that made him look like an offended lamb.

"Truly, we are not what we were, Sir John. Instead of a hundred brothers and more, we have less than twenty, and little bread for those; yet I think we do some good even yet." Then, before I could speak further, he recovered his kindly look. "And we have still something that might well be coveted!" he went on, cheering visibly. "Aye, as fine a thing as any you may see in the good Duke's palace! Would you look on our treasure, signor? Then do but step across the courtyard and enter the chapel with me, and you shall behold what a king might envy us!"

I heard one of my men mutter that he would much prefer a sight of a flask of wine, and I must say I agreed with him, for never had I felt less disposed to play the admiring onlooker. However, I was determined

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to atone for my ill manners by a sublime patience, for I knew from report that the Prior was the best and most charitable soul in the world, and did wonders despite his poverty.

With a determined amiability of mien that must have astonished my grinning troopers, I followed my guide across the wind-swept cloister, and passed with him through a door and into a crumbling but much frescoed chapel, the chill of which reminded me forcibly of a grave. The greater number of the friars were now at my heels, fixing me, to my amusement, with a solemnly triumphant gaze, as if looking to see me struck dumb by the sight of their treasure.

"Behold, Sir John!" cried the Prior with the simple exultation of a child, and pointed across the chapel to a spot near the altar.

Now, I had fully intended gratifying him by some show of admiration; but what I saw wrung from me an exclamation that held small pretense. Beneath the faint glow of burning candles shone a truly magnificent reliquary, formed of carven gold, and studded heavily with jewels—a thing the like of which I had seen in great cathedrals, indeed, but certainly had never looked to see in a bare crumbling place like this. My astonishment was so obvious that the Prior and his flock were delighted, and smiled and nodded like happy children.

"In the name of the saints, where did you get that?" I demanded, when I had recovered my breath. "Faith, were it not for your cloth and your holy name, I should say you had been plundering some sacred place, as my knaves outside are apt to do when I leave them to their own devices overlong!"

THE Prior beamed indulgently, evidently taking my last words for the jest which, I knew to my cost, they were not. Then he leaned against the wall with the air of one making himself comfortable for the telling of a long tale, and I suppressed a groan at thought of my tardy supper.

"It chanced this way, Sir John," he began, while his friars grouped themselves happily to listen. "There is at Avignon a certain great cardinal who was my friend and playmate in boyhood. Our paths have separated, alas! I have not seen him for twenty years, and am likely never to meet him again, for he is now rich and powerful, while I—" He pursued that part of the matter no further, apparently crediting me with wits enough to judge for myself. "But he has never forgotten his old friend, and a month since, on my saint's day, he sent me this splendid reliquary, enshrining one of the bones of Saint Peter! Was it not a noble act? When I think of it I forget our poverty and misfortunes, considering only how blessed we are to hold such a treasure within our walls."

Happy in his subject, he ran on and on about himself, his kind friend, and the relic, but his voice came to me in a meaningless babble now, for I was indulging in some reflections of my own. While the cardinal from Avignon had probably acted with the best intentions in the world, it struck me that his gift was likely to bring in its train some very doubtful blessings. The dukedom of Padua was, to put the matter mildly, in an unsettled state, and swarming with thieves, broken soldiers, and bands of freebooters, any of whom could have broken in the rattling gate of the monastery as easily as a man cracks a nut.

These gentry, to be sure, would have been entirely indifferent to the bones of a saint, or for that matter to the bones of all the saints in the calendar, but that reliquary was another affair and plenty of rogues would have sold their souls for the least of the gems that studded it; so, had I been the good Prior, I admit I would have slept the easier beneath a roof unhallowed by its presence.

"Faith, now I understand why you showed so little alacrity in the opening of your gate," I commented, when I found myself able to get in a word. "But tell me, have you been threatened, that you are so fearful?"

For his nature seemed to me one unlikely to suspect evil unless the danger of it were thrust under his very nose.

My words had a startling effect on both him and his friars. On the instant they lost their complacent look, shuddered, and drew together with such timorous glances to the rear that I must confess my own gaze followed theirs.

"Alas, that we have, Sir John!" cried the Prior. "For a week past, I give you my word, I have had scarce a moment's sleep. There is a black villain in the neighborhood, one who ravages and de-

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spoils and burns the huts of peasants——"

"Has he a name, this miscreant?" said I, as he paused for breath.

"A name? Aye, and one that I remember daily in my prayers, imploring that he may be turned to repentance!" groaned the Prior. "Pozzi he calls himself; and I have thought of him, Sir John, till at times it appears to me that the name is written across my brain in fire."

HE WENT on to tell me, I think, various instances of the fellow's iniquity; but again I was not listening, for I knew much more of Messer Pozzi than he did. To be frank, with every respect for his prayers, I thought they would have little result, for this cutthroat was of a sort better dealt with by steel than by intercession with heaven. Plenty of tales had I heard of him of late—how with his twenty men, the remains of a lately disbanded set of freebooters, he lurked in the lonelier parts of the country, marauding as the fancy took him, and vanishing before retribution could befall him.

"Upon my word," said I, "you are not so much to blame for feeling timorous if this gentleman is afoot in your neighborhood! Have you any reason to think he intends visiting you?"

It seemed there were more reasons than one for such a belief, and the Prior, now limp and white, gave them all with a detail I could have spared. The fellow had been in the neighborhood for days. He had been heard to boast openly that, when he went, the famous reliquary should depart with him. Above all, the day before there had been within the monastery walls a beggar whining for charity, whom the friars now believed to have been this very Pozzi, come to spy out how the land lay.

As I glanced about the crumbling place, so easy of entrance, I reflected that his observations must have gratified him considerably; and I smiled despite myself when I learned that before departing he had humbly craved a sight of the celebrated relic, and then, with a glimmer of impudence showing in his eyes for the first time, had solemnly warned them that it was scarce safe to keep such a treasure in a spot so poorly guarded! Assuredly the knave was an amusing one.

"Heaven grant me some intercourse with him in future!" I cried fervently, to the great astonishment of the friars.

WELL, never did petition find prompter answer, for the words were still on my lips when steps sounded without, and my troopers, who had doubtless been occupied till now with stabling their horses, came crowding into the chapel to the last man, in a state of suppressed excitement.

"Your pardon, Sir John," cried the foremost, "but there are rogues outside forming for an attack on the place! We have heard the sound of hoofs, the creak of leather, and low voices! What is it your will that we shall do?"

Grant a man his wish, and in nine cases out of ten he will curse you heartily for your pains. A moment ago I had been anxious to meet Pozzi. Now I realized without enthusiasm that I had but a dozen men to his twenty, and might very easily find this my last battle; also, what at the moment concerned me nearly as much, that I was extremely hungry and a good deal more inclined to eat than to fight. However, one must take events as they come, and I had no idea of letting this fellow add to his fame by a successful raid on the roof beneath which I lodged; besides which, I had taken a fancy to the good Prior and was not unwilling to aid him.

"There, pluck up heart, man!" I said briskly, glancing about me. "We will protect you, if only you will all cease deafening us with lamentations and let us keep our wits about us. They will be across the walls and in the cloister in a moment; our best hope is to stand against them here in the chapel, and—" At this point an inspiration made me wheel on the startled Prior, at which he started back from me as if I had been Pozzi himself. "These rogues know nothing of my presence here, is it not so?" I cried. "They think they attack a place garrisoned only by monks! Well, they shall have such a surprise as they never had yet, and we shall have the jest of our lives! Quick, fetch me a dozen and more monk's robes, such as you are wearing now!"

If I had awaited for the Prior to obey me, I should doubtless be waiting still, for he did no more than stare at me with an open mouth; but one among the friars, a tall, thin, dark man to whom I had not hitherto

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given a glance, suddenly darted forward and vanished on the quest. Meanwhile my troopers, guessing what I intended, burst into roars of laughter and rocked helplessly back against the wall.

"Faith, we have been all other things in the world save monks, so why not that too?" cried one of them. "But Sir John there had best cover his head with a cowl if he means to deceive the rogues; never did any man see a priest look as grim as he looks now!"

Paying scant attention to their foolery, I inquired of the Prior whether Pozzi and his followers had ever seen him, and learned with satisfaction that they had not. By this time the good brother was back with an armful of robes, and was assisting us to don them. He had possibilities, that fellow, and might have made an excellent soldier. Noticing the gleam in his eye, it seemed to me for a moment that he would join us in the fight; but habit was too strong for him, and he retreated among his comrades. At that very instant there was a great crash without, and I needed no especial cleverness to divine that the gate had flown into fragments.

"Begone!" I cried hastily to the friars. "Pray for us elsewhere if you like, but keep your tongues still, and leave us the chapel for our encounter!"

I must say that they obeyed with commendable promptness at least one part of my order, that relating to their departure; for they fled like phantoms into a little oratory adjoining the place, where I believe the Dukes of Padua had been wont to pray in past times. And meanwhile my men and I drew together before the door and awaited the attack, the strangest set of gray-robed Franciscan friars, I suppose, that ever man's eye beheld.

WE WERE ready none too soon. At once a group of figures came speeding across the cloister, wavered, and halted an instant as they saw us against the dim candle-light.

"By the saints! Here we have the good fathers themselves, standing to arms to defend their shrine!" cried a voice. It had a certain note of authority, and I credited it to Pozzi, nor was I mistaken, as I learned afterward. "Come, holy sirs, what have you to do with swords and violence? We will make a bargain with you. Retire, give us a brief moment in the chapel to pray forgiveness for our sins, and we swear solemnly to leave the monastery at once and for always!"

At this generous offer I came forth a step.

"In the name of the Virgin, my sons," said I, with a frightened quaver in my voice, "consider before you commit this sacrilege! We are few and weak, and sworn to peace, but I warn you—" here I imitated the bleat of an alarmed sheep—"that in a cause like this we have no choice but to fight!"

They interrupted my spirited defiance with a great roar of mirth, and it was as well, since otherwise they would certainly have heard the strange sounds which my troopers could not wholly repress even under a vengeful glance from me.

"A freebooter you should have been, not a prior!" cried the man in advance, "but for all that, I think we must try our luck!"

And with that the enemy was upon us.

The next few moments were, I fancy, among the most astonishing of their lives. They had looked to pass the doorway with a single rush. Instead, they found themselves met by a solid row of swordsmen who were a good deal more than equal to the situation. It was not for nothing that I let no man into the White Company till his fencing had been tested by a hard master. Two, three, four knaves went down; cries of astonishment rose; and presently an unreasoning panic had begun.

"Friars, these?" I heard one fellow mutter, as one of my rogues entertained him with an especially delicate bit of sword-play. "They are devils, no less, or angels come down to blast us for sacrilege!"

Indeed, I gathered that this last idea suggested itself to almost all of them, and proved far from inspiriting.

"I never fled yet from mortal man, but I vow I'll fight these spirits no longer!" groaned one of those who had been gayest in the advance, as he fled across the court and vanished through the shattered gate.

WE WERE fighting in the chapel now, up and down the nave, feet clattering on the stone, breath coming hard. It was no scene for a sacred place; and yet, as I saw with amusement even in the

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thick of the turmoil, it seemed one with not a little attraction for the holy. Though the friars had fled at my command, their curiosity proved too much for them. Every chink of the door of that oratory—and it had chinks a-plenty, being far gone—shone with watchful eyes. Some three or four bold spirits went so far as to thrust out their heads in their excitement.

I recognized the kind gray orbs of the Prior himself, round as saucers, and fascinated, like the eyes of a child listening to his first battle-tale. As for the thin dark friar who had fetched the robes, he was watching with the face of a born soldier, and shortly proved his metal. One of my men was driven up against the oratory door, very hard pressed and gasping. In another moment he would have been cut down, when that friar leaned out from above, raised a heavy billet of wood—heaven knows in what dark corner he had found it—and brought it down with crushing force on the head of Pozzi's rogue, who was just about to spit my man neatly.

The fellow dropped like any log, never knowing what had befallen him, and the friar drew back, nodding his head with a quiet satisfaction, the gesture, good to see, of a soldier who knows his task well done. I am seldom mistaken in a man, and I tell you I would have given much to transfer that monk from his monastery to my White Company. He had chosen his métier very ill.

Meanwhile, I found myself with no more time for gazing about me, for I was now enjoying the honor of crossing blades with Pozzi himself, and a lively experience it proved. I liked the villain from the moment I clearly saw him. He was a thief, of course, a cutthroat, a being utterly without conscience or mercy, and other things too numerous to mention; but for all that, he wore his villainy in a debonair fashion, with a glint of teeth and a gleam of black eyes, and plenty of words not lacking in wit.

I had not a few of his sort in my Company, and usually found that after a few lessons in obedience and civility they proved the most useful of my men. Moreover, he used a sword as if he had played with one in his cradle; I learned that when, in the first moment of our encounter, he executed a neat thrust which might well have sent me through what of life remained to me with but a single ear. To fence with such a man is a joy, and I honored him with my best sword-play in such fashion as made his eyes open wide.

"Now the devil aid us! What sort of friars are these?" I heard him gasp, over and over again, as I paraded before him the most subtle thrusts of France, Spain, and Italy.

"Ah," said I grimly, by way of answer, "you do not find it so pleasant after all, your little raid on a dozen helpless monks? Doubtless you have seen a good deal of the world, Messer Pozzi? So at least the rumor runs; but it appears you have yet to learn how friars, when defending a holy relic, can turn in an instant to soldiers who put your cutthroats to shame. I am a prior no more; it is no joy to me to fight, I tried to turn you off with soft words, but you pressed me too far, so thank yourself for the result!"

AND with that, enjoying myself hugely, I completed his bewilderment by playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse, pointing out all the chances for deadly thrusts that he afforded me in his growing panic, criticizing his defects in a learned fashion. For his part, he called alternately on the saints and the devil, which was not logical, and muttered a collection of oaths which must certainly have much lessened his chance of aid from one of the sources invoked.

I was his better at sword-play, and he knew it; but after all he was a good fencer, and though I did not tell him as much, I was fervently grateful that every moment saw another of his men either fall or flee, and the advantage of numbers lean steadily to our side; for if two or even one of his satellites had come to his aid against me, I think it more than likely that the real Prior and his flock would have sung a requiem for my soul next day.

Besides being an excellent swordsman, Pozzi had some of a leader's qualities, for hard as I pressed him he did his best to rally his men.

"Stand, you knaves! Stand to the last! If you flee now, never let me see your faces again!" he shouted at them above the clash of steel, and brought his oaths into play once more. I know something of this fashion of speech myself, but I must confess I was struck with admira-

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tion, and noted some of the more vigorous of his expressions to use myself in time of need. "Are you going to make us the laughing-stock of all Italy, fleeing from a pack of friars? *Domeniddio!*" The last word came in a smothered shriek, as my point pricked his shoulder. "Who was it told me the Prior della Croce was a meek, mild man of little spirit? If I had the liar in my hands now! Ah, if I had him!"

There was a sort of pious frenzy in his voice, and though I had no idea to whom he referred, through common charity for a fellow creature I hoped his wish would never be granted.

"Why, my son," said I, continuing my sword-play, "because a man now wears a robe, does it follow he never studied fencing before turning from the world? In my youth I was held a somewhat promising swordsman." Well, that much was gospel truth; so I had been. "And if I have trained my friars to the same art, because there are wicked men in Padua and I thought it not so unlikely we might have to take up arms for our monastery, have not plenty of good churchmen belonged to the church militant before this? At all events, to-night's affair has certainly proved my wisdom. And now I think this bout of ours had better come to an end!"

Glancing about me, I saw that of the twenty who had come so merrily to the assault there remained but a half dozen, and that they were in an ill case. One was leaning on the wall wringing an arm from which the blood fell in a steady stream. Another hopped to and fro like a goblin, clutching at his knee. The rest, all more or less disabled, were in full flight, wishing nothing so much as to get out of the door and take sanctuary in the open country with those luckier ones who had fled in the beginning; but this natural desire seemed to have small chance of fulfilment, since two of my best swordsmen, finding themselves unoccupied, had thoughtfully placed themselves on the threshold and were barring the way. A half-hour ago we had been outnumbered, two to one; now the advantage of double numbers had shifted to our side.

"Learn how the Prior della Croce defends his holding, Messer Pozzi!" said I, and ran that gentleman through his sword-arm with a good deal of satisfaction.

HIS weapon clashed on the stone floor. He cursed again, with the eloquence I had come to expect of him, and glared about the dimly lighted chapel. Plainly he did not feel cheered by the sight that met his eyes—six disabled men, hemmed in by a dozen of the terrible friars who had proved themselves wolves in the clothing of sheep.

"Accursed cowards! To flee, and to fall before monks! Had all of you stood together, we could have borne them down, and by Heaven you shall pay me for it!" Then, of a sudden, he recovered his self-control, and faced me with a low bow and that engaging twinkle that always lay at back of his gaze. "You are right, Signor Prior, I have certainly made a mistake in coming hither. I make you my compliments on your friars, who should all have been soldiers, and my apologies for these miserable cravens, my men, who should assuredly all be monks, and whom I would offer you for that purpose save that they are quite unworthy of a monastery like yours!" He glared at the rogues in question, rather unjustly, I thought; for whatever might be said of those who had vanished, those who remained had stood bravely against a set of most expert fencers. "I also assure you that I have lost every vestige of my desire to possess the very handsome reliquary which I see glimmering yonder. And lastly—" he waved a polite hand toward the two figures at the door—"I beg you to command for me a free passage, that I may take myself forever out of your sight!"

It struck me that there was still a good deal of cheerful insolence about this fellow; a disabled sword-arm seemed to have remarkably little effect on his spirits. "Not so fast, my son," I answered with a head-shake. "I am a peaceful man, and would gladly let you go if I followed my inclination. But, alas! I have a duty to perform! I must think of your souls, else I were unworthy my office!" And I turned to one of my men. "Brother Stefano," said I, "begone as quickly as you can, and fetch me here a dozen stirrup-leathers!"

Brother Stefano had a narrow escape from a guffaw at sound of his new title, but hid his mirth in a feigned cough, and vanished with a grin of intelligence which Pozzi and his men, had they noted it, must have thought most unholy.

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Indeed, had they been in a state of mind to consider trifles, they would probably have realized that the presence of stirrup-leathers argued the presence of horses, and that it was notorious how for years this monastery had possessed not even a mule to aid in its labors. But, truth to tell, they were somewhat dazed by the events of the last half-hour, and, moreover, I gave them small leisure for reflection.

"Never think, my sons," said I, as impressively as I could, "that I bear any malice against you; that would be unpriestlike indeed! I forgive you freely this assault on a house of poor, toiling friars, who never harmed you or any other man! But we are bidden to save souls, even by force if it must be, and if you go away tonight as great sinners as you came the fault shall be none of mine. Now, I have long prayed for your band after our Franciscan fashion, and it is plain that prayers are useless. Yet I am not discouraged. For different men different modes of salvation. We will try, in all affection, the methods of the Order of the Flagellants, so widely spread through Italy and so much esteemed!" And paying no heed to their bulging eyes and dropping mouths, I turned toward Brother Stefano, who at this juncture had appeared again beside me. "Come," said I to my men, "do half of you stand by with drawn swords, to hold these friends of ours in check if they turn against what we must do out of love for them; and let the other half of you do as I do now!"

With which I seized a stirrup-leather and advanced on Pozzi himself, as the man most in need of spiritual aid of any in sight.

I HAVE heard often enough that the saving of souls is a difficult thing, and that night I proved the saying's truth. Pozzi and his men were a most unregenerate band, giving us small thanks for our efforts on their behalf—showing, indeed, a lively disposition to make return by cutting our throats. But they were, fortunately, at a disadvantage, and the sight of bare steel close beside them had a quelling effect.

"Come, come!" I shouted to my troopers, setting them a good example the while, "you are too gentle, you will never save souls so! Can you not see that the devil is in these poor brothers of ours? Drive him out, then, at any cost, for what matters the state of their backs if their souls are aided?"

My rogues obeyed me with a right good will that told how much to their taste was the situation. What a scene was that! I laugh still to recall the oaths and groans of those bandits, who a little time ago had been so overbearing and now scarce dared utter a protest. For my part, I have some doubts whether we exorcised any evil spirits, but none at all whether we convinced the knaves that they were dealing, for the nonce, with Satan in person.

"In the name of Heaven, Signor Prior!" groaned Pozzi at last. "I assure you that you need labor over me no more! My soul, for one, is saved—yes, and all my sins expiated, many and various though they are. Be content, and let me go!"

For perhaps a moment longer I affected uncertainty whether the result I desired had really been attained; then I let myself be convinced, and bade my men halt, which, having by now entered completely into the spirit of the thing, they were most reluctant to do. Lastly, I confronted my disheveled line of penitents, and addressed them with a face which I had some work to keep sober.

"I hope it is as you say. I hope indeed you have turned from your evil ways," said I, "but of that I must have some proof before you go! All the world knows the fashion of life you have led of late, robbing the poor, torturing peasants till they paid all they owned for ransom. You have plenty of booty about you, am I not right? Well, I have a heaven-sent thought! What better reparation could you make than to empty your pouches of all they hold, leaving their contents as a willing offering to the Monastero della Croce?"

If in truth I believed this inspiration one vouchsafed me by heaven, it was all too plain that Pozzi and his men did not agree with me; I must have been dull-witted indeed had I not gathered as much from their oaths and cries of rage, nor was I astonished, for I knew well enough that knaves of their sort would sell their salvation twenty times over before parting with one scudo of their plunder. However, I showed no annoyance at their quick fall from grace, only friendly regret.

"*Ohimè!* I see it is as I feared, and your cure is not worked after all!" I mourned, shaking my head. "Well, then, there is

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nothing for it but to try again," and I made as if to raise my stirrup-leather in the air once more.

The result was a gratifying one. With ludricrous haste they seized their pouches and emptied them, while I bade my men watch them closely lest the devil whisper in their ears a hint to keep back some especially valuable object. Their act of sacrifice, I am sorry to say, was accompanied by many groans, oaths and scowls; but I decided not to notice these, concluding that the act, even without the proper spirit, was better than nothing at all. And what a heap of treasure grew there before my eyes! It became plain to me that the lltte band had not wasted all its time on peasants; they had been in great houses and chapels too, or they would never have acquired these golden rosaries, jeweled chains and earrings, and little piles of golden coin.

All in all, it was far more than enough to keep the Prior and his flock in luxury while they lived, and I doubt if at the height of its past splendor the Monastero della Croce ever had so profitable an hour.

"Bless you, my sons! You have driven off my last suspicion," I cried effusively, not appearing to notice the general lack of enthusiasm. "My thanks for your offering, and above all for the willing spirit in which you make it. Now I bid you farewell, praying only that you will not forget the Prior of this house and what he has striven to teach you!"

I HEARD one of the rogues mutter that there was small danger of their forgetting me, that he for one would as soon forget an encounter with a fiend incarnate. As for Pozzi, he was more civil. The fellow had, I must say, a most taking impudence. Even now, after an hour of such happenings as might have dampened the spirits of the most exuberant man on earth, there was still the hint of a twinkle in his eye.

"Signor Prior," said he, with a most respectful bow, "I never thought to admire a churchman, but, by the saints, you are a marvel! It has always been a saying of mine that I honored the name of but one man, that great leader Sir John Hawkwood; now I add yours." He paused with the air of one about to pay a great compliment. "You should have been a condottiere, reverend father! What pride it would have given me to serve under you!"

And he vanished from my ken, with his dejected followers trailing at his heels.

That last gratifying tribute of his would scarce have been paid to the real Prior could Pozzi have seen him as I saw him a moment later in the oratory door, pale and breathless, and shaking from head to foot.

"Sir John, Sir John!" he cried quaveringly, as I stood complacently waiting for his thanks. "Another instant of this, and I should have been a madman. Never, never have I known such an hour. I have small need of purgatory after it! And what is to happen in the future? You have fought in my name! All the world will believe that I, a prior, have wielded a sword like any ruffling captain of the Paduan army! Oh, what will the bishop say when he hears the tale?"

At this I confess that I came near to losing my temper, and excusably, for never did I get smaller gratitude for a most arduous evening. I was tired and hungry, and my right arm was fairly stiff from my efforts to banish Pozzi's evil spirit; and here was the Prior bemoaning himself!

"Man, man," I exclaimed, "can you find no more cheerful food for thought in the affair? Can you not see that I have given you the name of an invincible swordsman, and that hereafter you may leave your doors wide open o' nights without fear of invaders? And now, in the name of heaven, am I to have something to eat tonight, or am I not? As for your bishop, I will tell him the tale myself the next time I encounter him in the Duke's palace!"

AND so I did, no later than the following night, at the end of a meal which he and I shared with the Duke; and he laughed till I thought he would burst, for he was a fat man as well as a jovial. Nor was he the only one to laugh, though he was one of the few to know the truth of the matter. Within the month there was scarce a soul in the dukedom of Padua who had not heard that the Prior of the Monastero della Croce was a peerless swordsman, who had trained his friars to fence near as well as himself, and that this holy band had put the famous freebooter Pozzi to such discomfiture as that worthy had never known in his life.

All the country was one roar of laughter

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at the tale, and as for Messer Pozzi, when it was learned that he described the Prior as a gigantic man with a deep voice, he accomplished no more than the doubling of the general mirth; it was said sheer terror had worked on his wits, and after a time he came to believe as much himself. Certainly he never went back to ascertain the truth, and from that time forth the little monastery stood safer than if the Pope had drawn a holy circle around it.

But the affair had a sequel. You will recall that in the night's adventure two men had pleased me—the monk of the wooden billet and Messer Pozzi himself. I never saw the former again; but perhaps a year later I halted one day with a half-dozen troopers at a roadside inn, and found drinking at a table there an out-at-elbows being who was, as my eyes promptly informed me, no other than Pozzi.

He had, I fancy, met with much ill luck in the intervening time, for it is not to a marauder's advantage to become a laughing-stock, and his men, doubtless finding his temper anything but improved by that experience at the monastery, had one by one deserted him. Considering all this, I watched him a moment, and then beckoned him to come to me across the room, an invitation which, as he was alone and I had men behind me, he judged it best to obey.

"Well, Messer Pozzi, you cutthroat," said I, when he stood before me, "can you give me a good reason why I should not have you strung up by the neck outside the inn, as a pleasant sight for all honest folk and a warning to those not overscrupulous?"

The fellow began to protest that I had mistaken him for some one else, but I cut him short.

"Do not trouble to lie to me. I have seen you before this, and know well enough who you are," I informed him. "As for me, I am Sir John Hawkwood. Suppose I allow you to take service with me; would you like that better than a death without the shriving of which you stand so in need?"

"That I would, Sir John!" he cried with an eagerness that would have been flattering but for the alternative I had offered. "It has long been my dream to serve you, and without boasting I may say you will not lose by the bargain."

"Of that," said I, with an indifferent yawn, "I am not so sure. My followers are all knaves, it is true, but they are men as well, and the last time I saw you, my friend, you cut as poor a figure as ever I looked on!"

Pozzi looked first angered, then bewildered. For a long moment he stared at me, and something in my face or voice gave him his clue. Slowly a grin twisted his lips and spread till it covered his whole face.

"Now mercy upon us!" he muttered, in a low voice of awe. "Was there ever such another fool as I, to have believed that a prior——"

But at this point I gave him a look that made him think better of what he had been about to say.

"Come," I interrupted, "I have no time to waste in chattering. You can join my forces if you like; but I warn you that if you try the tricks you were about when I met you last you will fare a good deal worse than you did that night!"

Messer Pozzi grimaced ruefully and put a hand to his back.

"Nay, Sir John," said he, "heaven forbid! I will be a very mouse!"

So he became one of my men, and though that devil of his still rises often enough for the exorcising, he has served me with sufficient faithfulness from that day to this.

But the friar in the Monastero della Croce was, alas! beyond my reach. If he has lived till now he is doubtless still pattering prayers, and has never guessed how many times, at the critical point of an encounter, I have wished him at my side with his billet of wood.

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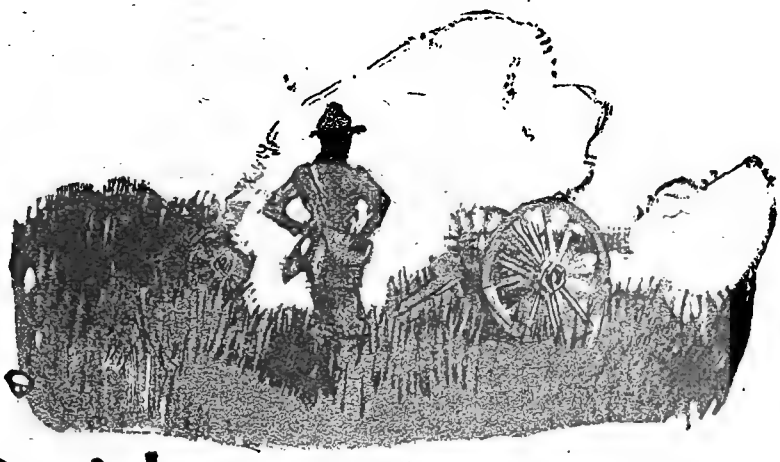

A Sprig of Holly

by Dwight L. Loughborough

"WHAT'S muvver's 'ittle toosie wootsie doin', eh? Does it want a lollypop?"

Sergeant McKittrick stood towering above the frail, hollow-chested little trumpeter of K troop, of the Eleventh Cavalry, an ugly sneer on his lean, lantern-jawed face.

"What's it doin', eh?" he repeated. "Writin' anozzer letter to its muvver? Sweet 'ittle sing!"

"Mind your own business!" flashed the boy hotly, looking up from the letter he was writing with a short lead-pencil, as he knelt in front of an empty ammunition-case. A brick-red flush diffused his rather girlish face to the roots of his curly brown hair.

"None o' your lip, you sniveling rookey!" The sergeant shook a burly fist under the lad's nose as the trumpeter rose to his feet and stood facing his tormenter. "You sneakin' little coffee-cooler!"

"I'm not a coffee-cooler! I couldn't hold up my head that day."

"No, of course you couldn't. Your kind can't when there's fightin' to be done."

The sergeant turned abruptly away. The boy called after him, whiningly,

"I would have been in that fight if I could have stood on my feet—but I couldn't. Didn't the major-doctor say it was a good thing he got me when he did? I nearly died."

The boy was almost crying; his lips quivered; he sniveled.

"Of fright," sneered the sergeant. "Now blubber!" he roared, turning again to the trumpeter. "I allus know'd yuh was a baby. Now beller!" He walked back and stood squarely in front of the boy.

"Percy Darlington!" he sneered. "What a name! If you wasn't so gol-dinged shriveled up, I'd clout yuh one. I'd give yuh a wallop with poppy-dew on it." He shook his fist again under Darlington's nose. "You strut around like a pouter-pigeon s' long as we're warmin' barracks, but when there is some chance for real soldierin', muzzer's 'ittle lump o' sugar gets sick in its tummy. Bah! You nasty, little brat, yuh!"

The boy stood with his under lip between his teeth. His finger nails were punching holes in the soft palms of his long, slender hands. But he made no sound. Several of the troopers, lounging about, sniggered. One of them laughed derisively. Darlington turned away, his chin on his chest, and walked slowly out of the wide-doored bamboo shack.

FOR several weeks after Percy enlisted in the regular cavalry, in San Francisco, the regiment had drilled six and seven hours every day at the Presidio. Then they had marched aboard

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a transport, were packed like sardines into narrow bunks in the bowels of the ship, and started on the long seven-thousand-mile trip to "the country that God forgot."

Accustomed to luxury, with never a desire ungratified by a doting mother—who had called him "Baby Doll" until he donned long trousers—and an idolizing father, it was for the nineteen-year-old bugler a decidedly rough experience. Seasick most of the time, fed on "slum-gullion," baked beans—which always he had detested—weevily hardtack, tainted meat, dessicated potatoes and filthy coffee, the lad wasted to a mere skeleton in the thirty-one days the troop-ship consumed in making the run.

And then, just the day before the only fight in which the troop had engaged in almost a year's service in the Philippines, he had come down with a virulent attack of typhoid fever. He returned to the troop, now doing garrison duty in the little town of Zampate, a stoop-shouldered, hollow-chested, wabbling weakling, for whom there seemed to be no one among his comrades who had the least sympathy. For the most part they looked on him with scorn, with loathing. Always that is the price a soldier pays who has the misfortune to fall ill the day before he would have gone into his first fight.

Percy never had been particularly well liked in the troop. He was a "sissy." He was a "mama's boy." He was not made of the stuff of which men's men are made. At first his comrades' dislike had been less obvious however. They merely had ignored him, treated him with disdain. Now they openly insulted him, leered at him, called him vile names. And Sergeant McKittrick was the most insulting, the most intolerant of them all.

II

"HELLO, Bub! What's eatin' yuh?"

Percy was sitting on the ground in a clump of woods a hundred yards to the rear of the troop-quarters, his face buried in his arms, crooked over the top of a mahogany log. He was wishing he could die.

It was Christmas Eve. The first Percy Darlington ever had spent away from his father's house in the little town in Iowa where Percy was born and where his father was a prosperous country banker. The boy was heart-sick, lonely to the point of desperation. He had not a friend nearer than nine thousand miles. He had been goaded almost to frenzy by the bitter taunts and slurs of his comrades.

Even Lieutenant Randolph, commanding the troop, looked on the lad with obvious disapproval. He was a West Pointer, was Lieutenant Randolph, and his few years in the service had brought him in contact only with the rough-and-ready sort of men one usually finds in the regular army. He couldn't understand Percy's kind. A man who was physically weak, who sickened at the sight of blood, who fainted under a heavy load on a long march, who couldn't eat what was provided for him, and sleep wherever night overtook him, somehow wasn't a man, in Lieutenant Randolph's way of thinking.

"What's eatin' yuh, sonny?" asked a man beside the trumpeter, a second time.

The boy looked up to see a tall, broad-shouldered man in khaki trousers and a blue flannel shirt, standing bare-headed there and looking down at him out of smiling, languid brown eyes. The man carried his campaign hat in his hand. It bore no insignia. A Colt's forty-five nestled in a holster near the man's right hand. A Mauser carbine was slung across his broad back. A canvas-covered canteen swung from his left shoulder.

"Who are you?" asked Percy, surprised at seeing such a veritable giant.

The man was not a cavalryman; he was not an artilleryman; he was not an infantryman. Had he belonged to any one of the three branches of the service he would have worn an insignium on his hat, designating it and the regiment to which he belonged. Anyway, there were no other troops within three miles of Zampate. The trumpeter sat with his knees under his chin, and gazed in open-mouthed astonishment at the big, black-haired stranger.

"I'm Jack Spencer. They call me 'Missoury' for short," the stranger answered. "But what's the matter, lad? Got a belly-ache or somethin'?"

He spoke not unkindly.

"I'm just—sick of all this; that's all." The boy waved his hand in the direction of the rows of bamboo shacks which had

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been comandeered for use by the cavalrymen. "But who are you? How'd you get here?"

"Jungle-hikin' by my lonesome. Just come over from Baluucan—yonder side o' that hill. I'm lookin' for a certain individual by the name of Colonel Montenegro—which, in plain United States, means mountain nigger. We got heaps of 'em back in the Ozarks. Better ones 'an this here mongrel Tagalog son-of-a-gun ever dared to be, And *they* ain't worth powder to blow 'em to—t'other place—at that!" The stranger grinned. He rolled a cigarette and lit it. "What outfit's this?" he asked after a moment.

"K troop of the Eleventh Cavalry."

" 'Bout mess-time ain't it? You the bugler? Go toot your horn. I'll have some sow-belly and beans m'self. Reckon I'll have to put up with you-all to-night, bein' as I'm going out with a detachment of your troop to-morrow."

The stranger smiled again and held out a powerful hand to the trumpeter.

"Glad to meet up with yuh, sonny," he said jovially.

The boy jumped to his feet and shook the proffered hand.

"God, but you're a man!" he exclaimed. "I'd give thirty years of my life if I could be as big and powerful as you are—*just for one hour!*"

THE scout noted the glint in the boy's gray eyes, the tightening of the fine lips. He felt a tremor in the lad's slender hand.

"What's up, sonny? Some o' these here rough-necks abusin' yuh? Canteen-fighters calling yuh yellow or something? Forget it! Come on and blow mess-call. I'm 'most starved."

He laughed and slapped the boy heartily on the back. Then they started toward the camp.

"Some o' these here rough-necks been abusin' yuh?" the scout asked again, after a moment.

"My Lord!" Darlington exclaimed. "You can have no idea what a hell on earth they make for me. I was a blooming idiot to take on in the army. I—I—didn't know, you see."

"Heaps of 'em don't, lad. Been on sick-report?"

"Typhoid. I—I—missed the only scrap the troop has had."

"I savvy," the scout nodded. "And now they rub it in, eh?" He stopped and stood looking down at the boy. There was understanding in his eyes. "Pore little codger," he commented mentally.

"But you see," the boy went on after awhile, "it's the truth that hurts. I—I—*am* a coward. I didn't know it until I got to Luzon." It was half a sob. He dug his heel in the soft sod and clenched his hands at his sides. "I—I—I'm *yellow!*"

The stranger turned away his head and smiled.

"Never smelled powder, did yuh?"

"Only on the target-range at the Presidio."

"I mean—you've never been under fire?"

The boy shook his head.

"Then how the dickens do you *know* you're yellow?"

"Why, I—I—couldn't cut a chicken's head off! The very thought of blood makes me dizzy. That's why it hurts so!"

"Faugh! Don't you care what they say. Let's hike along and find out about grub. Got a good cook in the troop?" They started on.

"Best in the regiment, they say. And we've got a big troop-fund, too. Canned goods frequently—and things like that. But I can't eat the chuck they set out. Ugh!"

"Hand-raised, I reckon?"

"What do you mean?"

"Never roughed it until you took on in the army?"

"No. You see I——"

"You're all right, lad. Keep a stiff upper lip; grin when they try to rub it in—and jus' wait. Savvy?"

Darlington went to the cook-shack and was ordered by the commissary sergeant to sound mess-call. As he stood in front of the guard-house, his bugle raised to his lips, Sergeant McKittrick passed him.

"Is it goin' t' blow its little horn? The tweet 'ittle sing!" he sneered.

The sentry walking number one post, giggled. The corporal of the guard, lolling in a big bamboo chair in front of the guard-house, roared with laughter.

IT HAS been said that nothing will so surely bring out the latent devil in a man as ridicule. Darlington's talk with the big scout somehow had permitted the devil slumbering in his breast

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to break its shackles. The boy's face went white. There was an ominous light in his big gray eyes which it were well for McKittrick to have observed.

But the trumpeter made no reply. He sounded the call. The troopers fell in line, shouting and laughing, with their mess-kits rattling. Darlington blew assembly. The line marched in single file to the cook-shack for their rations of canned salmon, stewed prunes, hardtack and coffee. The trumpeter fell back and marched at the rear of the line.

"Oh me, oh my!" called a trooper a few paces in front of him. "There's the little sister. Wonder if it won't cry because there ain't turkey and fixin's fer Christmas dinner."

Several others laughed and rattled their mess-cups.

"The cold-footed dirt-heel!" commented another trooper in a low tone.

Darlington heard. His lips became a thin white line across the lower half of his face. The pupils of his eyes became mere pin-points.

With his mess-pan filled with prunes and salmon, and his cup half-full of coffee, the trumpeter sat down on the bottom step of a shack adjoining the one in which the cook held forth, quite apart from the others. On the ground at his feet sat the giant whom he had met in the clump of woods half an hour before.

"They do kind o' rub it in, don't they?" Spencer asked after a while, as he sat munching a piece of hardtack.

"You heard 'em?"

"Yes. But don't you care, lad. Every dog has its day."

"You don't understand."

"Maybe I don't. But I've seen a heap o' cowards in my time. They's several varieties, you might say."

III

IT WAS the custom at Zampate to mount the guard just before retreat roll-call in the evening. They were in a wild, mountainous region in northeastern Luzon. The natives were restless, treacherous brown devils. They were relentless head-hunters. They hated white men worse than His Satanic Majesty is supposed to hate holy water. It was necessary to mount a large guard. And it was essential that the men be fresh for the long night's vigil.

Sergeant McKittrick was detailed for guard that Christmas night. He stood beside Darlington, his carbine at a trail, as the boy sounded guard-mount call. Darlington made a false note.

"Is its 'ittle rosebud lips gettin' tired? Mama's 'ittle toodlekins must go to bed."

As the last note of the call died away and the trumpeter stood waiting for the order to sound assembly, he turned quietly to McKittrick and said in a low, even tone,

"If you aren't careful, I'll kill you some day. Just as sure as there's a God in heaven!"

The approach of Lieutenant Randolph, who came sauntering along from the troop office across the street to mount the guard, prevented the big "non-com." from making any reply. But he looked at the boy with an ugly grin on his swarthy face. As he noted the boy's eyes, however, the grin faded. Then he shrugged his shoulder, stood at attention and saluted the troop commander.

After guard-mount, came retreat. Then, as the troopers broke ranks and scattered to resume their several pastimes, the mail-orderly, escorted by a squad of jaded cavalry, rode into the little town, from squadron headquarters three miles away, and halted in front of the troop-office, where the bundles of letters and papers, which had arrived from the States a few days before on a government transport, were turned over to the "top" sergeant. The men of K troop came running and cheering.

"Mail! Mail! Whoop-pee! Yow!" they shouted and stood in a semi-circle about the "top."

"Adams," called the sergeant, and handed a bundle of letters to a corporal. "Adler, Agnew, Bain, Burns, Burton, Carson, Charles," and so on down the alphabet. When he came to the D's, he called, "Daly, Damon, Darlington—a big bunch for you."

Darlington stepped eagerly forward and received the package addressed to him. He held his head high. His shoulders were thrown well back. His under lip was between his teeth. He glanced at the "top" sergeant sharply.

"Well, well," said a trooper near. "Sister's got a nice Christmas present."

Everybody laughed. Darlington went away by himself to read his letters. There

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were nearly a score of them—from his mother, father, sisters and friends, back in the little Iowa town whence he came.

Big Jack Spencer sauntered over and sat down near him. The boy did not notice the scout at first. From one letter he took out a sprig of holly and sat looking at it in the murk of the dying day. Tears filled his eyes. He coughed and cleared his throat. Then he turned to the stranger and spoke softly:

"Kid sister sent me this. It's off the vines they'll have for decorations, back home to-day."

"Kid sister, eh?"

"Yes; I have three. But the kid and I always have been pals; you understand."

"Them berries is awful red, ain't they?" Spencer said, pointing to the branch the boy held in his hand.

"Aren't they beautiful!" enthusiastically. "Somehow holly always seems to mean so much to me. I suppose it's because of the association. We always use it at home to decorate the house at Christmas time. And such fun!" The boy sighed. "The red of the berries seems to me to symbolize love—the kind a fellow's folks have for him, you know. And the green seems to signify the everlasting quality of the affection."

The trumpeter spoke fervently and held the sprig of holly to his lips.

"Reckon you're right, sonny. From your kid sister, eh? Kid sisters is great things to have. I—I—had a kid sister once."

The scout choked and put an arm across the trumpeter's shoulders. He was such a little chap! And so homesick and lonely.

AFTER a while came tattoo; then taps. Then all was still in the little town there under the ugly, hanging lip of a great mountain cliff, beside a turbulent, growling stream. The wind soughed through the trees; the moon rose over the rim of the mountain. Night birds called; dogs howled; strange lizards screamed *pulk-you, pulk you-u-u-u* throughout the night. The troopers on post paced their beats in monotonous fashion, their Krag carbines at a carry. Sergeant McKittrick sat in front of the guard-house, his chin on his breast, half-dozing, except when he roused to make vicious swipes at the mosquitoes singing about his head.

On his narrow bunk in a corner of a near-by shack, Percy Darlington lay tossing, moaning in his sleep. At times he muttered. Once his "bunkie" heard the boy murmur the word "Mother." He heard him sob.

"——, I believe the kid's more home-sick 'an anything," the trooper thought. "I don't believe he's as yellow as everybody tries to make out."

It was perhaps three o'clock in the morning, an hour after the first relief had gone on post, relieving the third, that Darlington awakened with a start. Cold sweat was standing on his forehead. He was trembling violently.

He had been dreaming. A horrible dream it was. He had dreamed that Sergeant McKittrick was pointing a long finger at him and calling him a coward, a "sniveling yellow-backed rookey." There was a malevolent sneer on the sergeant's face. About the trumpeter stood the men of K troop, and his father and mother and sisters. All of them, including even the "kid" sister, jeered.

Darlington sat up in his bunk and passed his hands over his face several times. His heart was beating furiously. He felt faint. His head went spinning.

"By God, I'll kill him!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper.

Then he slipped out on the floor of the big room, where a dozen other troopers were quietly sleeping. He glanced down at the face of his "bunkie," now snoring sonorously as he lay on his back, his big mouth open, his arms over his head. The moon came from behind a dark cloud and flooded the room with a ghastly, pale yellow light.

Darlington reached under his canvas bunk and took a short-handled kris out of his knap-sack. A curio it was which he had picked up in a Chinese junk-shop in Binondo. No one in the troop knew he had it. The crooked two-edged knife was as sharp as a razor. It were mere child's play to decapitate a man with such a weapon. With an ordinary blow, a man could halve a person from the crown of his head to his crotch. The boy felt cautiously of the knife's keen edges. A sardonic grin crossed the boy's face. He started for the door, the kris held tightly in his right hand, crouching like an ape.

In front of the guard-house, which was the third shack up the narrow, crooked

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street from the one in which Darlington was quartered, the sergeant of the guard sat in a wide bamboo chair, his arms hanging limply at his sides, his carbine across his knees, his head thrown back. He was fast asleep.

At the farther end of the beat of number one post, which extended from one corner of the guard-house to a giant teak tree, a distance of perhaps a hundred feet, stood the first relief sentry, lolling against the tree-trunk, his carbine at an order. He was dozing. Inside the guard-house the men of the second and third reliefs were sleeping soundly. A death-like stillness, broken only by the snoring of the troopers, the sighing of the wind among the branches of the thick foliage overhead, and the occasional cry of a child some place in the town, hung over Zampate.

DARLINGTON stood well within the deep shadow of the shack adjoining the guard-house, and for several minutes watched the sleeping sergeant of the guard. He glanced at the dozing sentry and grinned. A great bat went whirring through the sticky, humid air. Somewhere, far out in the mystic moonlight, a carabao uttered a hoarse, strange cry; a dog howled answer. The sentry started, glanced quickly around, then leaned again against the tree. Darlington heard him sigh, wearily. Then he saw him slide down the tree-trunk and squat on the ground at its butt. The man leaned his head against a low-growing limb and laid his rifle on the ground beside him.

Darlington crept stealthily toward the sleeping sergeant. His eyes seemed fairly to snap. His lips fell apart. His lower jaw dropped like the jaws of a baying hound hot on the trail. When he had come to within a few feet of the great hulk in the chair, which was between him and the sentry, he raised himself slowly to his full height and drew back the kris. He held his breath. And then:

"For the love of ——. You ain't that kind of a coward, sonny."

The words were spoken so low as to be scarcely audible a dozen feet away. Darlington started and turned around, the kris upraised. He looked squarely into the face of the big scout, Jack Spencer.

"You!"

"S-s-sh! He's wakin' up. Better duck that toad-stabber out o' sight."

The scout stepped between the boy and the sergeant. McKittrick started up and rubbed his eyes. He grasped his carbine and jumped quickly to his feet.

"By golly, I almost went to sleep!" he exclaimed.

"It shore is quite a night for snoozin'," Spencer replied. "But somehow I couldn't get my peepers shut, and so I come pesticatin' around, thinkin' maybe I could dig up a chaw o' tobaccy."

He turned to Darlington, who had slipped the kris under the shack and was slinking away in the shadow toward his quarters.

"Why, hello, there! Couldn't you sleep neither? Come on over here and chin a spell. Got a chaw on yuh?"

"Why, bless me, it's sister!" laughed McKittrick.

The sentry had leaped to his feet with the agility of a monkey, when the sergeant roused, and now was pacing back and forth from the corner of the shack, to the teak tree. When the sergeant spoke of the trumpeter he stopped in front of his superior and laughed.

"Sister? Who is sister?" Spencer asked blandly.

"The horn-tooter there. Lord A'mighty, but he's the limit."

"Come on over here, kid. Let's have a look at the limit. Come on."

Darlington walked slowly back to the guard-house and stood trembling, but defiant, beside the scout.

"What'd he say about me?" he asked and glanced at McKittrick.

The sergeant laughed and slapped his leg. The sentry sniggered and resumed his slow, swinging walk back and forth in front of the guard-house.

"Nothin' that you got any business payin' any attention to. The likes o' him never does say nothin' worth repeatin'."

"Say! If you go gettin' gay around here, I'll slam you in," bellowed McKittrick, an evil light crossing his ugly face.

"So? And you'd be '*broke*' in the mornin', pardner," quietly rejoined the scout. "Get that? '*Broke.*'" He took a step toward the sergeant and shook a finger under McKittrick's nose. "If you want to pick on somebody, you big rough-neck, why just finish your guard trick here and then gather a few of your pals together and start in on me. Savvy? I'm sort o'

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itchin' for a scrap, as you might say."

"God!"

The exclamation came from the lips of the sentry at the far end of his beat. A second later a bullet whistled over the heads of the trio standing in front of the guard-house. Then another, and another.

"Turn out the guard!" shouted McKittrick and the men of the second and third reliefs rolled out of their bunks, hooked their belts and sprang to the gun-rack near the wide door of the shack.

IV

THE sentry was shooting now from behind the tree. He emptied his chamber and magazine and then started back to the entrance to the guard-house, running with his chin on his shoulder, loading as he ran. A dozen feet from the door he suddenly fell backward, his legs buckling under him, and lay still.

Bullets whistled and zipped about the ears of the guard as the men deployed as skirmishers across the street and into a vacant space covered by thick underbrush on the opposite side.

Down the street came the fanatical brown devils, yelling like fiends loosed from hell, brandishing their spears and waving their deadly bolos. Many of them were armed with long bows from which they shot poisoned arrows, with deadly aim; some of them were armed with old-style Remington rifles; a few of them were shooting with Mausers. The "mountain nigger," as Spencer had called the Tagalog leader, Montenegro, had been successful in his effort to stir up trouble among the hillsmen.

McKittrick, bully though he was, could not be reckoned a coward, as the majority of bullies are. He threw himself into the thick of the fight with magnificent vigor. His voice, in command, boomed above the popping of the rifle-fire and the howls of the brown devils. The guard poured into the Malays a hot but ineffective fire. As fast as some of the savages would fall others would step into their places.

After a few minutes the Americans fell back before the on-coming of the head-hunting pagans, who could plainly be seen in the bright light of the full tropical moon.

With the third shot Darlington sprang to the gun-rack, where his bugle hung on its yellow cord, and grabbed up a Colt's forty-five, which he threw to Spencer, together with a belt of cartridges.

"Give 'em your best!" he shouted.

Then he blew the shrill, blood-curdling call to arms. Troopers poured out of a score of shacks, many of them but to fall dead as they came into the street. Lieutenant Randolph came running out of his quarters clad only in his pajamas, a Mauser carbine in his hands, bare-footed, shouting orders at the top of his voice.

Darlington picked up the carbine which had belonged to the sentry on number one post. He took the cartridge-belt from about the dead man's waist and buckled it about his own. Then he dropped on his right knee beside Spencer, who now was kneeling in the middle of the road, pumping steel-jacketed bullets from a carbine which had been dropped by another trooper who would have no further use for a rifle. Percy and the scout fired as fast as they could load and pull the bolts.

For a little more than an hour the fight lasted. But for the Americans it was as unavailing as a cry in the dark against an ebbing tide. The surprise had been complete. They were outnumbered fifteen or twenty to one by a frenzied horde, drunk with blood-lust.

Torches were laid to the nipa-thatched huts which comprised the buildings of the village. Flames leaped up angrily, lighting with the brilliance of midday the grewsome, bloody scenes being enacted there. Dead and wounded lay everywhere. White men and brown, lay side by side and one on top of another, in sickening, bloody masses.

PERCY DARLINGTON, the "sniveling, yellow-backed rookey," fought like a demon. There was no need of a bugle in that fight. It was "every man for himself and the devil for the lot." Darlington emptied his belt. He picked up another full belt and shot away half of the cartridges in that one. The barrel of his carbine became so hot he could not hold it. His shoulder ached with the savage recoil of the weapon. He threw the gun away and picked up another one. The bolt stuck, for some cause. He grasped the barrel in his two slender hands and swung the butt against a thick Malay skull. Then another, and another.

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A bullet bored into his right side, splintered a rib and tore a gaping hole under his arm. It was a brass-nosed Remington bullet. He kept on fighting. He had ceased to be human. He had become a fiend incarnate, whose only function was to kill, to destroy, to soak in the blood of Malay savages.

The brown devils had slipped up to the outposts and cut them down with bolos, or thrust them through with spears. It had been easy of accomplishment.

The few male inhabitants of the village above the age of puberty fought with the invaders. Shrieking, demoniacal women applied torches and jabbed poisoned spears into the bodies of wounded cavalrymen. Children, clad in moonbeams, danced and screamed, reveling in the banquet of horrors.

Over the dangerous mountain bridle-path rode at break-neck speed two other troops of the Eleventh Cavalry. They brought with them a Maxim rapid-firer. But they could not use it because K troop—what was left of it—was fighting hand to hand with the brown devils in the bloody streets of Zampate.

But the relief charged in sets of fours; they rode the Malays down; they clubbed them to death with the butts of their carbines from the backs of their giant American horses.

When at last the fighting had ceased, and the last of the savages had fled, Lieutenant Randolph started out to ascertain just how much damage had been done. He carried his left arm in a sling made of a piece of a dead man's shirt. A trumpeter from L troop sounded recall and then assembly. Twenty-nine men of K troop answered to roll-call. Of these, seven had been wounded and were compelled to fall out before the order could be given to break ranks. Sergeant McKittrick with not a scratch held the head of the line. There is an old saying to the effect that the devil takes care of his own.

"All present or accounted for, sir," reported the "top" sergeant weakly, blood streaming from an ugly gash over his right eye, "except the following."

Then he named them. The "top" could call the roll of the troop without the roster, and he could remember the names of the troopers who did not answer. Among the latter was trumpeter Darlington.

"Dismiss the troop," ordered the lieutenant and sank down on a log.

The Americans had been driven out of the town, inch by inch, to a clearing in a forest a mile from Zampate, which now was naught but heaps of smoldering ashes. Gray dawn was breaking.

"Come over here, leftenant, if yuh ain't too weak," said Jack Spencer to the commanding officer of K troop a few minutes later, as Randolph sat watching the captain doctor and the hospital corps' men of the squadron working over the dozens of wounded cavalrymen.

"What is it?"

"Look there," Spencer said quietly, after he had led the officer to a clump of bushes by the roadside, and pointed to the forms of two men lying side by side, their eyes staring.

One was the head-man of the brown devils. The other was the trumpeter of K troop. The native had run the boy through with a spear. The boy's hands were clutching at the Malay's throat. A bullet had bored through the savage's head as he fought with the wounded trumpeter, the "sniveling, yellow-backed rookey."

"Brave little devil!" exclaimed Randolph.

He bent over the body and opened the neck of the lad's shirt. A sprig of holly fell out of the pocket over the boy's heart. It was soaked in his blood.

The lieutenant picked up the holly and stood looking at it with swimming eyes.

"Yesterday was Christmasj" he said softly.

"A —— of a Christmas," Spencer answered, and took the emaciated little form of the trumpeter in his arms and started up the hillside.

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The Napoleon of American Bandits

The Account of a Forgotten National Conspiracy

by G. T. Ferris

ORGANIZED banditry doesn't flourish under our contemporary conditions in the United States. Sporadic crimes such as those of the train robber, of the so-called Black Hand, and the lone highwayman are pregnant enough to occupy a considerable portion of the newspapers, as they are in all civilized communities. But we must look back to a much earlier period to find a chronicle of an attempt to bring together in a widely extended conspiracy under a single head all the forces of evil which festered over fifty thousand square miles of sparsely settled territory.

The field of this satanic campaign extended from Cairo, Illinois, to the Mississippi delta and cut the width of a broad swath through a half-score of slave States. Wholesale and retail robbery, counterfeiting, land swindling, negro stealing and selling, blackmailing, and even murder and assassination, all played their part in this vast campaign of crime.

John Murrell, the apostle and leader of this infernal cult, the would-be Napoleon of chaos and crime in the Mississippi Valley, the organizer of a desperate clan of some twelve hundred miscreants, taught his followers that it was the safest way in most cases to kill the victim, unless there was some obvious reason to the contrary.

"Make an end of the —— fool," he was wont to say; "rip out his bowels and heave him into the nearest swamp or bayou; then the body won't rise as testimony."

He himself would boast, in the swagger of his cups, that he had slaughtered forty men with his own hand. But most of his crimes were committed through agents.

But this diabolism was only the fringe of his ambition, appalling as it was. The goal of his hopes was a great negro insurrection throughout the South, which would sweep the slave States like a devastating flame.

With this lust of rapine, giving it a sharper edge, was a venomous jealousy and hatred of the rich which had become like the mania of a rabid dog.

His organized money-getting schemes, through robbery and a web of affiliated crimes, which had extended over a period of ten preliminary years, gave him the means of gratifying the basest forms of lust and riotous living. These he indulged in to a swinish extent at New Orleans, Charleston and other Southern cities at periodical times. His appearance of wealth, his fine clothes, his lavish extravagance, and a cer-

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tain dashing vivacity, which he could assume at will, gave him the entrée even into the society of the wilder young men of fashion, against whom his inner spirit gnashed its teeth in the thought that he would one day cut their throats.

But such use of wealth was entirely subordinate to the zeal with which he purchased arms—rifles, pistols, pikes and knives—and cached them at numerous convenient places. The time of the slave uprising he had fixed for Christmas night, 1835.

THE MEETING ON THE ROAD

ABOUT eighteen months before this expected climax, an interesting encounter occurred in the woods of Madison County, West Tennessee, in what was then known as the Choctaw Purchase.

Virgil Stewart, a young Georgian, had come into a small inheritance from his father a year before and had then concluded to invest it in the virgin lands of that newly opened tract. He had made his entry, paid the fee, and after keeping the store of one Clanton, a probate judge, for a while, had returned to Georgia to complete the purchase and take residence.

Stewart was out riding one evening in the early dusk when he overtook a striking figure mounted on a fine hunter, which he sat with the ease of a finished horseman. The stranger, a man of erect, spare figure, had a peculiar face which at once riveted Stewart's attention. The eyes, of a cold, piercing gray, were set close together under beetling brows, and the mouth had thin lips, which in their curves carried a suggestion of cruelty. Otherwise, the features were good, and the manner was perfect of its sort, as he accosted Stewart with well-bred ease and the resonant voice of one accustomed to public speaking:

"Good evening, sir. I hope that you are enjoyin' your ride in the twilight gloaming. There is something delightful at this hour in the woods. Nature declares the glory of God"—partly shutting his eyes with an air of pensive enthusiasm—"but this meetin' of day and dark among the tree-pillars always makes me think of a great church made without hands."

Stewart stared at this salutation, which he politely returned, and for a moment fancied the stranger an itinerant minister of the better class. But he thought it odd that a gospeler should ride a thoroughbred hunter and carry heavy pistols in his holsters, with a knife in his belt and a sawed-off shot-gun on his pommel. Yet almost all white men were wont to ride armed then in that country and there was nothing suspicious in the fact, except the pious twang of the overture.

The stranger caught Stewart's look and said suavely:

"My host, who lives about ten miles from hyar, is out of venison, and so I thought God would send me a chance for a buck. I don't believe in slayin' the beasts of the field wantonly, but they were created for the use of man, we are taught in Holy Scripture. Do you reside in this district, sir?"

"Probably I shall," answered Stewart, "as I have recently bought land here, and am on the outlook now for some likely slaves. I may have to run down to New Orleans to get them, though it is a costly trip, for a good lot of them have disappeared from here of late—run away or stolen. That's a fine horse you're riding."

"Yes," said the other with a sinister twinkling in his eye which Stewart's keen observation noted, "I'm a good judge of a hoss, or of the sons of Ham whom God made for service. I trust, sir, you will find a nag as good, and all the black boys you need. I shall be hereabouts for the next fortnight, and then I shall obey the command of God to call sinners to repentance at the camp-meetin' over in Shelby County, up Memphis way. Pardon me, sir, but I took an instant likin' for you and I hope we shall get further acquainted. I ride in these woods every evenin'. Good-by till we meet again."

He doffed his hat with great punctilio and spurred his horse through a by-road in the darkling woods. Neither had mentioned his name to the other.

Stewart pondered over the meeting as he ambled home, conscious of its incongruities. He mentioned the occurrence to his host, Rev. John Henning, Baptist preacher in the scattered hamlet of Tuscahoma and a small planter who worked a dozen negroes.

The dominie rubbed a stubbly chin, and wagged his head:

"I wonder if it can be that fellow Murrell, who's been hangin' aroun' fur the last six months off and on, down at the Corners. Ye know two of my boys have disappeared.

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'Twas a fortnight since, just before you came back, and I've suspected him of slave-stealin', but couldn't get any clue. My Dick smells the same rat and has been lyin' low, but ye see neither of us ever met him; he comes and goes like a shadder.

"Then he's got a lot of pals aroun', and some of my neighbors swear he's all right; hearn him preach the finest sermons in the world—lay preacher, ye know—and got the spurrit of God in him."

Stewart was greatly interested, and a thought glimmered in his mind.

"Well, I'm likely to run across this man again. I'll find out what I can, but if he's a rogue he's right cunning."

He little thought how soon he was to be taken into confidences so monstrous and appalling in their revelation as to stagger the fancy.

A FEW days later he again crossed the stranger not far from the scene of the first meeting, and the latter greeted him with an air of unmistakable pleasure:

"I have thought a good deal about you, sir, since I met you the other night. I reckon we're kindred spirits somehow, for I know human nature pretty well and rarely make a mistake," with an air of great complacency. "I thought I'd like to have a long powwow, for I'm a lonely man, though I know many people. I am unexpectedly called away to-morrow evening. Pray, sir, come and spend the night with me at the Corners. My host of the tavern has fine old 'apple,' and a brace of wild ducks fit for a king or for—" stopping with lips pursed into an enigmatic smile.

Stewart gladly assented, and they rode together a few miles farther to the Corners, which consisted of a log tavern, a ramshackle store and a rude blacksmith shop. The ruffianly landlord lowered at Stewart with a glance of suspicion, but quailed at the imperious scowl which his more familiar guest shot at him, as, turning with a wave of his hand, he said:

"This is my friend, Mr. ——" with an inquiring look.

"Oh, my name is Hues, Adam Hues," answered Stewart, wondering with alarm whether the landlord could possibly know of him. Seemingly not, however, for he ushered them in stolidly.

The self-dubbed Hues thought it strange that the other had not even given his own name, but he bided his time and asked no questions. After supper under a huge gum-tree, and with a tongue well loosened by frequent libations of apple toddy, the man of mystery began to unbosom himself.

"You are a speculator, Hues, and so am I, though not perhaps in the same line. The world has treated me badly and you, too, I reckon, if I read you aright. See the swarms of the rich, whose claws are fastened on all the good things of life, the best to eat, the best of drink, the finest of clothes to wear. The world has nothin' too good for 'em, and they get it without turnin' their hands over. Under the law they've got the top cyards, and, by ——, they rook the game! After all it's the law of cunnin' and of the strong hand at the bottom.

"We—you and I an' many another—are cheated out of our dues, I tell ye, Hues, unless we go in at the bottom and take what's comin' to us by the strong hand an' the fearless will. If ye could only hear my friend, John Murrell, talk on the thing! He's one of the greatest men in the world, sir—beats Andy Jackson all to death, and I want ye to meet him."

And so he went on in a fierce tirade against the whole order of society. He expounded a philosophy which was not merely that of the beast of prey, but that of the anarchist bent on turning the world upside down out of sheer love of storm and convulsion. Nothing was to stand in the way—life, pity, love, rights of others—and in all this devilish oration John Murrell stood out as the inspired apostle.

The young man had listened without a word, with the same feeling that a hidden spectator would have at watching cannibals at their ghastly banquet. He had had time enough to make up his mind, and he nerved himself to see the thing through.

"Sir," he said, extending his hand, "I don't know who you are, but put it right there! What you've said has sounded a hidden chord. I feel you're exactly right, sir, and that we ought to get even with our oppressors in any way we can. You reckoned straight when you saw in me a congenial spirit."

So they parted for the night, leaving one of them little chance for sleep in the thoughts that swept over him. Why had this man taken him into his confidence,

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baring the hideous contents of his soul to a stranger at the second meeting, when commonplace prudence would dictate great care in trusting one who was not even as yet sworn a proselyte?

THE next morning as they rode through the woods, talking of indifferent matters, Stewart was accosted with the sudden interjection, "I am John Murrell!" accompanied by a look of piercing question.

"I suspected so last night," was the answer, "and was rejoiced to know a man of my own kidney."

A handclasp seemed to relieve the other's mind of any passing doubt, and Murrell said bluntly:

"I need a lieutenant, a man of grit, of brains an' resources. Will you be that man, Hues? I picked you out by an unfailin' instinct, instantly I saw you."

The young man agreed, and two hours later they parted, arranging a rendezvous for two weeks later, as Murrell was compelled to go away on some call of his nefarious work. During that ride and on subsequent occasions this colossal villain told in part the story of a life bristling with crimes of every sort with a smack of infernal pride which Satan himself could not have surpassed. These details are fully narrated in the pamphlet which Stewart wrote, now almost impossible to secure, and in the book afterward prepared from its materials, also a very rare volume.

THE TRAINING OF THE ARCH-CRIMINAL

MURRELL'S mother, a Tennessee mountain woman, had, in spite of an honest father, trained her young son as a thief from early childhood. While yet a stripling, he began to steal horses, and in disposing of these he fell in with various small predatory gangs, who did not hesitate to murder as well as rob. Young Murrell's superior address and cunning made him an adept in disposing of robber loot, and he gradually became initiated into all the successive grades of crime.

He brought to the business great craft and power of organization and the ability to make use of the villainy of others. At first Murrell appears to have avoided the personal shedding of blood in his sinister ambition to prey on humanity. But when he made the plunge he did it with a cold-blooded cruelty and abandon that showed what an easy step it was and how instinctively his temperament lent itself to pure atrocity. He described this first homicide to Stewart with a gloating as over a pleasant memory:

Traveling with some stolen horses on the way to a safe market, he joined a well-dressed and well-mounted wayfarer who introduced himself as a South Carolinan planter going to Tennessee to buy meat for his negroes. He was evidently well supplied with gold and rode a fine black horse. Waiting till they arrived at the edge of a bayou, Murrell struck the unsuspecting man with his heavily loaded whip, fracturing his skull. After a belt of $1200 in gold was stripped off, the corpse was flung into the swamp.

"With that act, the thought flashed on me like lightnin', as the safest rule to go by," said Murrell, "that one can't afford to rob unless he is just as ready to kill, an' I've never deviated from it."

It was shortly after this that he was arrested for horse-stealing and was sentenced to the penitentiary for three years. He was a model prisoner and gave up his spare time to assiduous reading, more especially to the study of theology, law and the rudiments of the healing art.

"By the time I was released," boasted this star boarder at the State's expense, "I could prescribe for any ordinary complaint; I knew the Bible like a child's hornbook; I was a better master of the criminal laws of a dozen States than most lawyers, and had learned to preach a fust-class sermon. The fust thing, indeed, I did," the wretch chuckled, "when I was released from quad, was to strike for a camp-meetin', where I ranted a couple of sermons that raised a roar of hallelujahs, and under cover of it I got off with three fine hosses which turned me in $400. I tell ye, Hues, that preachin' business is the finest cover for a smart speculator"—that was the term habitually used by Murrell—"which the good devil ever gave to man!"

On another occasion, as he narrated with great gusto, a finely dressed traveler overtook him on a lonely road and they rode on amicably till they came to a ford over a creek. Murrell dropped behind and with leveled pistol ordered his companion to dismount and take off his clothes. He considerately gave his helpless victim time to

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commend his soul to God, and when his watch had ticked off five minutes he stepped to the side of the kneeling man with the remark: "Waal, I reckon you've had time to get the Almighty's pardon for your sins," clapped a pistol to his head and blew out his brains, disemboweling the body and sinking it in the swamp.

SUCH terrible stories he poured into Stewart's ears with the rollicking simplicity of a boy rehearsing the details of a bird-nesting expedition.

Highway robbery and horse-stealing involving a series of red-handed murders, however, finally ceased to be productive enough. He turned to negro-stealing as more productive of large and quick profit, as well as safer. His method was simple enough. He would seduce negroes by drinking with them out of the same flask, which made the credulous blacks open to his schemes. He said he would convey them to the far South, sell them to as many masters as he could, from whom they were to run away for a fresh sale. That he would give them half the money secured, and finally land them in a free State, was the bribe held out to the poor wretches, over whom he had a great fascination. He had made many thousands of dollars in this way.

His blood-lust, however, often broke away from the comparative safety of this commerce, in which he could always pose, if need be, as one who was returning runaways to their owners. Often he would greedily return to the road and murder for the pure pleasure of it, as another would go on a drinking escapade. He had stations along several hundred miles on different routes for herding and transferring his black cattle on the way to New Orleans and other Southern marts.

In a visit to New Orleans he himself with a comrade was held up and robbed in one of the city suburbs. Murrell gave up his wallet gracefully and expressed his happiness in meeting with gentlemen of the road like himself. One of the desperadoes, not to be outdone, returned the plunder, vowing he would take naught but kindness from brethren, and the four promptly became good friends, going to the outlaw headquarters. From his new pals, who were persons of prominence in their trade, with widespread connections, Murrell got much valuable information.

He received, too, all the passwords and the freemasonry of recognition. Thenceforward his daring and inventive mind proceeded rapidly in organizing outlaws, ruffians and miscreants of every description for the wholesale plunder of society.

THE ISLAND RENDEZVOUS

STEWART met the bandit chief, and as they rode west Murrell told him that they were on the way to one of the principal headquarters of the clan which was on an island in a Mississippi bayou, just across the river from Memphis. Here he would meet some of the principal men and be sworn into the band.

Murrell was exhilarated into a fierce hilarity, for this Napoleonic ruffian seems to have been inspired by a genial liking for his chance recruit which banished all his native caution. He had, in his craving for a perfect confidence, beguiled himself into the conviction that in Hues he had found the very twin of his soul. He now outlined to his companion something of the colossal scheme of a negro uprising, over which his diabolical spirit had brooded so long.

"This may seem too bold to you, Hues, but that is what I glory in," he said. "All the crimes I have ever committed have been of the most daring. I've been successful in all of 'em. I am confident I shall be victorious in this matter. I'll have the pleasure and honor of seeing and knowing that by my management I have glutted the earth with more human blood and destroyed more property than any robber who has ever lived in America or the known world. I look on the American people as my common enemy. They have disgraced me" —thus he designated his short term of imprisonment—"and they can do no more.

"My life is nothin' to me, and it shall be spent as their devoted enemy. My clan is strong, brave, experienced and rapidly increasing in numbers. I shouldn't be surprised if we numbered twenty thousand at the time of the expected uprising. And I am strong in the high standing of so many of my chief councilors, many, indeed, in honorable and lucrative offices. Should anything leak out prematurely, those men would drive away the fears of the people by ridicule, turning it into a cock-and-bull story.

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"We have considerable money in the hands of our treasurers to complete our purchases of arms and ammunition, to fit out the companies that are to attack the cities and towns. We will manage to get possession of the different arsenals and supply ourselves from every source that may offer. The negroes wouldn't want many arms till they get 'em from the houses they destroy, as a knife, a club, a pick or an ax will do to murder families at night, when they are dazed with sleep and terror at the light of their burning homes."

Stewart tells us that he afterward marveled that he refrained from shooting Murrell then and there, for he always kept one hand on a pocket derringer, a silver-mounted pair of which had been given him the day before by this incarnate demon.

Perhaps the feeling that the one soft spot in Murrell's nature was the curious infatuation for himself restrained his itching hand.

They found themselves on the banks of the Mississippi, at that time storm-lashed, at dusk, but the rowboat on which Murrell relied was gone. So they applied for hospitality at the house of a planter named Champion. He looked askance at Murrell when the latter requested the loan of a skiff on which to cross. Stewart at once appraised him as an honest man and not one of the many secret confederates of the robber gang. Champion felt a note slipped into his hand as the twain parted from him next morning, read a warning in Stewart's eyes, saw a finger motioned to the lips.

The island rendezvous was a sinister-looking place set in a little river bend that somewhat concealed it. Fringed with cane-brake and mangrove swamp, a narrow passage of clear water led up to higher ground in the center, though that, too, was ambushed by dense forest growth, a fitting home of secret crime and conspiracy. Five miles away on this Arkansas side was the nearest settlement, and a very small one at that. A great squat one-story log house with several outbuildings, a number of rude shacks on the edge of the clearing, where Stewart saw a score of blacks, crowned the little hill.

All day long small parties arrived at the island. To these "Adam Hues" was introduced as a new and trusted recruit, until about fifty were assembled, a few of whom would never have been suspected of other than a reputable life. These were some of the principal members of the "Grand Council," and this was the night of the regular quarterly meeting.

DURING the day Stewart witnessed an episode that gave a fresh touch to his horror at Murrell and his plans. The negroes assembled there were awaiting the coming of the flatboat that was to ship them to the New Orleans market, but one of them had become so suspicious as to instigate fear in the others. Him Murrell beguiled away on the pretense of catching fish for supper, and, having led him to a remote place by the riverside, buried a bowie-knife in his back and flung the bleeding corpse into the bayou to be taken care of by the river-cats.

Stewart saw this through the mangroves, and half an hour later met Murrell, whose face was smiling and unconcerned as ever.

The Council was held in the evening in the log house. We can imagine the scene, though Stewart describes it with prosaic simplicity and directness. The great, rude barn-like place, lighted by the smoky glare of pine-knots; the long table strewn with jugs of whisky and apple-jack; the raucous clamor of nightbirds, innumerable insects and wild animals in the encircling jungle; the blasphemy, obscene stories and anecdotes of personal crimes that punctuated the business; the terrible presentment of things to come; the dank and rotten odors of the swamp mingling with those of perspiring and filthy ruffians, and the pungent gases of the flaming torches—so can we fancy the scene.

Yet business was transacted with some order, and Murrell, the leading spirit, drank nothing lest he should lose his ascendency over these rude and violent spirits. Reports were read from local centers as to the progress of the slave-uprising conspiracy. Figures were given for the three months past as to the various money-making crimes which had been committed in some five States. Plans were discussed for perfecting the methods of propaganda among the hosts of negroes on the plantations.

The last business done was the formal initiation of "Hues" as a member of the gang and as a Grand Councilor. Stewart made his plunge boldly; his speech, as he himself set it down, began in these words:

"My youth and inexperience must plead the cause of any deficiency I may betray before this worthy and enlightened congrega-

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tion. I am better qualified to acquiesce in the plans and measures of others than to advance anything of my own. I have received all my ideas from our honorable dictator. I should feel guilty of presumption were I to offer any amendments to his present deep and well-arranged plans and purposes. Your schemes, under the guidance of our experienced leader, appear to me to be practical and praiseworthy. My opinion of the faith and principles of this lordly band may be expressed in a few words; and as I have been honored by the instructions and confidence of our leader, to be whose creature only is my highest aspiration, I flatter myself of its correctness."

This and the inflated harangue that followed gained the confidence of the gang. The robber chieftain wrung Stewart's hand and glowed with delight at the fulsome praise. The young man was initiated, sworn in under blood-curdling penalties, taught all the grips and signals of recognition, and the night was worn out in a mad debauch.

THE BETRAYAL AND WHAT FOLLOWED

THE next day the Grand Council dissolved, its members departed, and Murrell, who stayed to superintend the loading of the black cattle in a flatboat for the slave-market, was finally left alone with his lieutenant.

"There's $20,000 in that batch," he exulted, "and we will have another cargo next month."

The bandit chief in his unbounded confidence then insisted that Stewart should do what he had feared he might not be able to accomplish—make a complete list of the Grand Councilors, their occupations, places of residence, and their assignments in a conspiracy of murder, arson, robbery and devastation unparalleled in American history.

It was necessary, said Murrell, that Hues should know all the leading accomplices and how to identify them.

It took two days to secure this fatal transcript from the books, and the scribe was amazed to find, among the four hundred names on the black schedule, participants scattered over the States south of Virginia, men of unquestioned repute and social place, even professed ministers of the gospel, wolves in sheep's clothing, judges on the bench, law-practitioners, newspaper-editors, merchants and hotel-keepers, men one would expect to find wedded to the stability of order and suppression of crime.

There were also six hundred and fifty "strikers"—ruffians of the common sort, whose business it was to execute orders, or practise any kind of outrage that came readily to their hands at every-day hazard. Stewart was informed, too, that the signatures of either class fell far short of including all the affiliated brethren, and among them to his amazement was his acquaintance, Judge Clanton, alleged to be an adept in all the secrets of the clan.

When the twain departed from the dismal island, reeking with its crime-laden mystery, Stewart, well-nigh overburdened with such a sinister revelation, devised an excuse to stop at Champion's plantation. To him he told sufficient to secure a pledge of coöperation at a moment's notice, and silence until the time was ripe. It was arranged with Murrell that his new man should meet him at a rendezvous a week later, to be formally assigned for active duty.

Stewart narrated his amazing story to Mr. Henning, and the old preacher was stricken dumb, suspicious though he had been in a vague way, by such a disclosure of wickedness as seemed almost incredible. What would the discovery do to bring this titanic criminal, literally an enemy to all society, to justice? Reading between the lines of Stewart's written narrative we can fancy some such answer as this:

"Murrell must be arrested at once, though I am the only witness on whose testimony an indictment could be found. Murdered men tell no tales and negro statements have no legal value. There will be scores to give perjured evidence to rebut my charges. I know quite well that the story of the slave-insurrection conspiracy and its extended network will be considered so monstrous as to be food for ridicule, and the conspirators will take advantage of that. Yet we must move promptly, and at any risk, in the seizure of the king villain, and keep him under lock and key while we hunt testimony to corroborate mine and have time to awaken public opinion.

"If we wait and take chances on the future, suspicion of me may kindle at any time, and it will be such hair-trigger work, with Murrell free to do his will and with so many accomplices, that my life wouldn't be worth

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thistle-down. But if we arrest him, his absence will leave the gang temporarily paralyzed, for no one of them will be sure of his own safety in the first crash of the shock. He's the brain, heart and soul of everything. Let us fasten him by the throat, and then trust to the future to build up further proof."

So it was determined that John Murrell should be arrested in an adjoining county and not in the vicinity of Tuscahoma, as it might mean that Clanton, who was justice of the peace as well as probate judge, would at once discharge him from custody. Champion and some of his friends came at Stewart's call and with Parson Henning, his son, and half a dozen trusty spirits, all armed to the teeth, serving as posse, a warrant was duly sworn out and Murrell taken. When the robber marked one face among his captors he spat on the ground and growled out between his teeth with a sort of frozen rage:

"It's well for you that I was such a —— fool; but mark you, traitor, this business isn't done yet, I reckon!"

Stewart half confesses that for a moment, demoniac-like villain as he knew the other to be, he felt a pang of shame that it had fallen to him, for whom a wretch like this had shown his one human weakness, to be the instrument of his betrayal, necessary as that was for the good of the commonwealth. While awaiting the action of the grand jury, the arch-desperado escaped by connivance, but was retaken and lodged in a Memphis prison, where he could be more effectively guarded. There he remained for several months before trial, the indictment being for negro-stealing, as the proofs of his vastly more heinous crimes were, as Stewart had anticipated, difficult to marshal. Murrell was convicted and condemned to ten years in the penitentiary for kidnaping and selling slave property.

Many attempts were made to get him released on bail during the three months interim, as well as to assist him to break jail. A campaign of abuse and slander of the most envenomed sort had been at once opened against Stewart, and numerous journals throughout the South heartily espoused Murrell's side as that of an innocent man.

THE young Georgian's life, as well as his reputation, hung in evenly balanced scales. Many estimable persons could not persuade themselves to believe in such a prodigy of guilt. He wrote and disseminated at his own expense a printed pamphlet, with a detailed account of his experiences with Murrell, scattering the document broadcast. One thing he did not do, however. He did not make proclamation of the names and residences of Murrell's associates of the Grand Council. He held it in reserve, making it public that the list was in such hands as would publish it if anything untoward happened to him.

This probably paralyzed concerted attempts at assassination, which would have almost certainly succeeded in the end, yet four determinated efforts were made to take his life, once by poison, twice by attacks from ambush and once on the broad highway by four desperadoes, from whom he escaped almost by a miracle. Stewart had reasoned correctly that the band would break up when its leader was taken and that the greater conspiracy—the deadly blow at the whole social organization of the South—would shrivel into collapse with its poison-fangs dried up.

Such is the irony of fate. A malefactor superlative in evil and steeped in every conceivable crime, who merited the scaffold a hundred times over, for whom no long-drawn tortures would have been excessive, died in a Tennessee prison after three years of incarceration for a minor offense, passing away almost in the odor of sanctity. Murrell assiduously read his Bible, prayed and preached the gospel to his fellow convicts and at one time nearly secured his pardon from the soft-hearted Governor.

Virgil Stewart, who brought him within the meshes of the law and foiled his satanic aims, was almost ostracized by a large section of the Southern public and was defamed by many of its newspapers as one who had unjustly stigmatized Murrell and created a nightmare out of his own imagination.

Time, however, wrought its compensation. Old members of the Murrell army of criminals were arrested and punished from time to time for new offenses, some condemned by Judge Lynch, others by judicial process. Their confessions before execution fully confirmed the terrible story told by Stewart, from ordinary murder and robbery up to the baleful conspiracy to drown the whole South in a sea of blood, rapine, lust and devastation.

Had it not been for the accidental meeting with Virgil Stewart in the gloom of the

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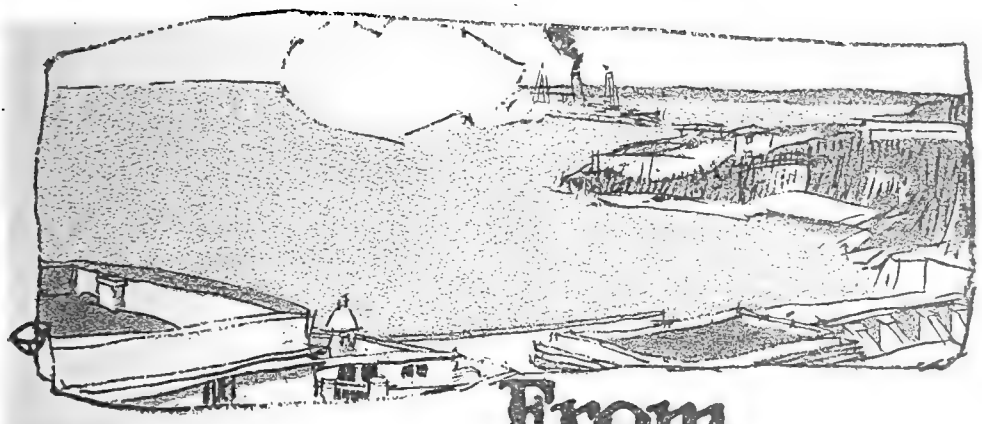
Tennessee woods, John Murrell, instead of being a mere vague legend known to only a few delvers into the past, might easily have become a name famous in the blackest pages of history.

Virgil Stewart, whose name appears in only one encyclopedia and possibly in no American history, probably averted from the Western and Gulf States of the South one of the worst convulsions which ever threatened their social fabric. This fact was finally acknowledged in a large sum raised by subscription, which was given him after he had settled in New Orleans.*

*The father of the writer was a subscriber to the fund, knew Stewart well personally and frequently heard his adventures from his own lips. The list of Murrell's confederates was destroyed by Stewart, as after the great robber's death its existence served no purpose.



From the Ashes

by

Campbell MacCulloch

THE only thing that ever took a free white man to San Felipe del Monte was a combination of circumstances over which he had no manner of control. The foreign population was composed largely of gentlemen who had appeared off the bar in a rusty fruit steamer before daylight. They usually came ashore hurriedly, breathed sighs of intense relief, and waited more or less patiently until their friends had compromised with the authorities, or the statute of limitations had done its leisurely work.

In the former case they hung about the wireless station and officially avoided the consulates; in the second they avoided the wireless establishment and spent their days checking off on the consulate calendar; in the interim they assisted the local patriots to conspire more or less successfully against the existing Government.

Conspiring was good at all times, for San Felipe del Monte was the capital, the more or less uneasy seat of affairs, and looked like a dish of pistachio ice-cream sprinkled with bleached almonds. Besides, there was a river that led back into the chain of mountains that looked as if they had huddled together to keep the town from escaping to the westward.

Among these, revolutions could be prepared and cooked to a satisfying crisp. The rest of existence was composed of palms, soft breezes, much heat, music on the munic-

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ipal plaza, longing homeward glances, cool drinks and the visit of the semi-monthly banana boats.

At five o'clock on the morning of the day upon which Guantepec threw off the yoke of the oppressor for the third time within as many years, Beverley Beauchamp sat up on the white sand beach and rubbed the rheum and cobwebs from his bloodshot eyes. There may have been more forlorn specimens of white humanity along the Central American coast, but assuredly they would have been hard to find. Briefly, Beverley was about the last word in applied indigency.

With a smothered groan he affixed a black-rimmed monocle in its place and arose shakingly to his feet by the primitive method of the infant: that is, he turned over upon all fours and elevated his hinder portion first. The cow also performs this feat most successfully. With a shaking hand over his burning eyes he staggered up the beach to the row of one-story *'dobe* structures where the natives sold *aguardiente* and some less potent spirits.

At the edge of the white roadway he paused, considering which of the places he would make his goal. As an afterthought he turned out his tattered pockets and searched the million wrinkles of his garments. He produced nothing but trickling streams of sand.

"Stony!" he croaked hoarsely. "Not a stiver!"

Painfully he made his way to the nearest *bodega* where a negro in white cotton shirt and ragged linen trousers, held in place by a leather belt, was sprinkling the hard baked pavement from a green-painted earthen pot, and essayed to pass him.

"*Vamos! Perro!*" cried the native with a scowl, and promptly slung Beauchamp into the middle of the roadway where he fell again upon his hands and knees.

There was no word of astonishment, or resentment, even, from the human wreck as he painfully picked himself up and staggered off to try in another direction.

SIX months before, he had been landed on the beach at night from a boat manned by blue-clad silent men. Outside the bar a great dim gray shape rolled silently in the ground-swell, and across the tumbling waters the faint roar of an exhaust-pipe came shoreward. In the morning there was nothing on the shimmering horizon, and Beverley Beauchamp was seated at a table in a café greatly disused by the populace, drinking raw *ron bacardi*. As Biggar, the American consul, expressed it:

"The beggar's as noisy as a steamed clam, but not quite so sociable."

No man had ten words from the new arrival during the month his money lasted. When it was finished he became by slow degrees a nuisance that touched the nerves of every foreigner in the place. He kept to himself, apparently enshrouded in a determined hopelessness that was as irritating as bad language, and while he never asked for liquor, he generally seemed to find a way to get it. No man knew where or how he lived, nor did he ever try for work.

Within two months of his arrival, the spectacle of Beverley Beauchamp thrown from even native drinking-places became common. White men turned away in disgust and inwardly fumed to see one of their breed kicked about by filthy *peons*, while the native population grinned delightedly at each fresh humiliation. The derelict had become a sore-lipped jest, and slipped even farther down. Continually he clung to the monocle and a half-puzzled expression.

His feet were bare, his hair ragged and unkempt, but he was always cleanly shaved, and the mystery of how this was accomplished was great, until Schmidt, the agent for the German rubber planters in the interior, came upon him painfully bent over the mirror of a pool and scraping himself with a piece of bacon-rind and a broken bottle, whereat Schmidt went off to the club and kept silent two hours. At the end of that time he arose, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and nodded his head slowly.

"*Herr Gott!* He vos a chentleman!" he informed the wall.

ON THIS particular morning of glorious liberty, Beauchamp wandered in a living flame of agony from one resort to another, begging, pleading, beseeching for just one drop of liquor. The sun rose higher, and he crawled along with the dancing devils of aching thirst deep in the backs of his eyes. His baked and parching throat cried fiercely for relief; place after place he tried, to be thrust aside with jeers and even blows.

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The streets and drinking-places were filled with chattering groups and shrill, excited laughter, for the old Government had fled when the liberators had appeared at sunrise. Not a shot had been fired, and but one bugle blew. The cause of glory had triumphed with not even a barked knuckle to show for a casualty, while the national armadillo squeaked his joyous song of freedom.

Time after time Beauchamp had tried to worm himself into one of these joyous groups, only to be pushed ignominiously forth again. In one place a *peon* slung a pail of dirty water over him as he lay sprawling in the dirt, and O'Reilly, the good-natured scamp who offended high art and good taste by conducting the local photograph gallery until—until affairs should have quieted down at home—knocked the jester through an adjacent doorway with a clean, left-handed jolt, and scowled as the derelict picked his shaking way to his feet and shuffled off.

"White man he is, an' th' divil take him," muttered the Irishman, looking after the other, "but I feel as if some wan had slapped me ould mother's face whiniver they give him th' boot!"

All the morning the sorry jest of San Felipe del Monte wandered feverishly about the rum-shops that lined the water-front and plaza, and the sun beat down upon his unprotected head. Once, in sheer desperation, he gulped some water from a public fountain, and the spasms that followed left him weak and doubled up with pain. He was panting like an animal, and his swollen tongue worked horribly about his blistered lips.

"Just a drop!" he murmured continually. "Just one drop!"

From far up the gentle hill where stood the Casa Blanca, the white marble presidential palace, there came the sound of a band playing the national air, and for no apparent reason the sound seemed to attract him so that he set himself painfully to follow the white-paved avenue that led upward. He stopped many times to rest.

The staggering progress, the black-rimmed monocle, and the half-puzzled, dim expression of the face excited even the dogs to derision, and these snapped idly at his heels. From far above him came a bugle-call, clear as the tone of a bell, and then the smart roll of a drum. For an instant he stood erect, but drooped again as the sound ceased abruptly. At the great gates to the palace he paused, and finding the sentry drinking with some comrades in the shadow of the orange-trees, he slunk within, hardly knowing where or why.

In the huge banquet hall within the palace the new Government was inaugurating itself into office with a cheer and such champagne as the former administration had been forced to leave behind, and it may be that the rum-crazed brain of Beauchamp ferreted out the drinking quite subconsciously. In the lands just north of the equator but three things are really necessary to the founding of a state, or maintaining social prestige—champagne, music and a sword. Given the time to use them, much may be accomplished.

THE former President of Guantepec, who was just then coaxing extraordinary speed out of a Spanish mule over the mountain trails, had been somewhat of a dandy and had indulged his esthetic tastes by the purchase of a marine confection called the *Dolores*. She was some fifty feet on the water-line, sloop-rigged, and carried an auxiliary engine for calm emergencies.

Altogether she was as dainty a bit of shipyard product as one would wish to see. Having hastily adopted the overland route away from a stone wall and firing-squad, the former owner had naturally left the yacht behind. She was now therefore the property of the Government, and lay in the sheltered mouth of the river.

The new administration had settled the more important affairs, such as the division of the spoils and offices, and was now in mood for lighter things, such as had to do with the welfare of the country, and whether iguana steak should be served with fruit and claret or with lettuce and rum, a somewhat fine point. So it was that the President, an agile, wiry person, with a black beard of the same texture, and a neat French trick of shrugging the shoulders, arose unsteadily to his feet and addressed his compatriots in arms and spoliation:

"Brothers glorious!" he exclaimed, being upheld by the Secretary of State on one side and an inverted musket upon the other, "Brothers glorious, and *camaradas* inseparable: thees day of libert' have we achiev' victory stupendous an' mos' gran'.

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Viva la libertad! Wow! In all things, my fr'en's, have we advancement. A great army have we. Mos' noble an' victorious commanders therefor," here he tapped himself upon the breast and swelled up two inches, "and much soldiers courageous. But, *camaradas* glorious and brothers inseparable, one theeng we have not. No sheep for fight on which to fly our thrice glorious banner of the land!

"Those so great sister countrees, Angleterre, France, America, they send the great sheeps to lie without, an' we mos' fire salute from our shore!" Here he burst into tears and sobbed convulsively for several minutes at the thought of his country's fearful deprivation. "It ees time, *amaradas* and compatriots, that we shall have the navy! Now!"

Cheers burst forth irregularly from the remainder of the Government, and the President saw he had touched a popular chord.

"The start to make lies ready with our han'," he declared, opening and closing his fist dramatically. "The cruel tyrant so malignant who now has fled has lef' behind hees sheep. We all have seen her. She s'all begin the glorious, magnificat navy of Guantepec! The sheep we have, but not the man! To us eet ees not give that we s'all of comfort be upon the sea, but to others the rolling beelow," he waved his hands about, "ees but a pleasure. Who then s'all we have for that thrice brav' *commandante* of thees sheep, gentlemen? I ask you? S'all it be——"

IT MAKES little difference whom the President had in mind for the glory he had named, for from the floor beside him arose the ragged, tottering figure of Beverley Beauchamp.

The President stared with extended hand and dropping jaw. The Secretary of State closed his eyes and shivered. Beauchamp swayed and glared horribly; then his eyes fell upon the President's brimming glass, and he seized it. He drank feverishly and grasped another. As he dropped the second with a crash upon the floor, the Secretary of the Treasury with a mocking bow presented him with a full bottle and a glass. The Minister of War took in the situation, and with a wide grin, placed a chair.

"'Ave some seat, *Señor Capitan!*" he finished in a vivid burst of enthusiasm, and the table took up the word.

"Ho! *El Capitan!*" was the cry.

With sincere admiration in his somewhat florid face the President placed a hand upon the proud shoulder of the Minister of War.

"*Buenos!*" he declared. "Eet ees mos' fit! You have nominate, I s'all appoint! From the sea he comes, to the sea s'all he go!"

Perhaps it was the sense of absurd contrast between the flamboyant and imaginative position to be filled and the abject misery of the object suggested that inflamed the temperament of these emotional liberators. So close to great ideas does lie the ridiculous. At any rate, pens, ink and official paper, together with the great seals, were sent for post-haste, and with great labor and much composite advice the first naval commission in the history of Guantepec was drawn up, signed, sealed and witnessed by the entire Government present.

The President managed to erect himself with difficulty, and amiably navigated down the table to where Beauchamp sat dully, clasping the bottle. In his upraised hand the chief executive bore the commission, and in his eyes were tears. His lips moved, and in more sober company it would have been agreed that the thrice noble accident of fortune was talking to himself. He halted before Beauchamp and regarded him affectionately and owlishly.

"In the name of thees, our mos' adorable lan' of liberty, I gif into your han's, señor, thees emblem of her trus'. You have been appoint' the *Capitan!* The good sheep *Dolores* ees yours! Go, gallant *camarada*; to you ees confide our honor! Mos' noble protector of Guantepec, your sheep awaits you! In the name of our brotherhood: *por Dios, por libertad*, go!"

A feeble, scattering cheer trickled from such members of the new Government of liberty as were still awake and semi-sensible. The President gravely placed within the arms of the dazed Beverley the commission and the two bottles of wine that were left upon the table, assisted the unfortunate bit of wreckage to his feet, and turned him in the direction of the door. Together they steered a wavering course toward the portal where a squint-eyed sentry slept against the wall. The President pushed the new commander of the fleet into the corridor, and waved his hand.

"*Attencion!*" he cried. "*Salute el Capitan, muchachos!*" and forthwith subsided gracefully upon the floor.

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Between the lines of wondering, nondescript soldiery the dazed, limping, swaying figure staggered out into the sunlight of the marble portico.

Surely no man may say when his fellow shall have touched the depths of degradation from which there may be no return! Always until the final bugle-call there is the chance that some fertile spot in the bruised and fevered soul will receive the seed of retrieval, and grow fresh and clear again in response to the single whispered word.

II

IN THE wide portico, Beauchamp leaned against a pillar and looked down at the white houses below him. Far away over the red roofs he could see the estuary, and close among the sheltering palms shone the glistening sides of the little *Dolores*. Then his glance sought the roll of paper he carried, and into his bloodshot, burning eyes there crept great welling, blinding, scorching tears. With a crash the two bottles fell upon the marble pavement, and the bubbling liquor went hissing unheeded down the broad steps. Beauchamp clutched the paper to his breast.

"My God!" he cried aloud. "My—good —God!"

Stumblingly he made his way down the steps and out along the curving pathway to the white shell road. The sentry at the gate shrugged his shoulders as the tattered, weeping figure passed him.

"*Carambal*" he muttered to himself, gazing curiously after the other man. "All are crazed, these *gringos!* Each one!"

From beneath the orange-trees where lounged a group of soldiers came a mocking cry:

"*Loco! Loco!*" it rose.

The foreign residents maintained a club on a modest scale over the portrait-gallery where O'Reilly produced abusive caricatures of the native populace, swearing continually during the process. It was a long, cool, high-ceiled room with many windows and six electric fans imported with great ceremony by Dan Cleveland, who gave his address very solemnly as "Ohio," and acted as shipping agent for the coffee planters. The electric fans were operated without cost from the dynamo of the wireless station a hundred feet away. A Japanese artist, who had thoughtlessly carved a compatriot into saddle-colored souvenir shipping-tags in Mexico City, was in smiling and efficient charge.

VISITING white men, as a matter of course, were conducted to the club and installed on the wide, sheltered gallery that faced the sea, and there fed a rather neat effect in dynamics produced by the judicious admixture of rum, coconut-juice, sugared claret and one lime. It followed, therefore, that when the *Esperanza* of the Blanco Line dropped her hook off the bar the morning after Beauchamp's appointment, the single, keen-eyed and alert passenger who came ashore in the purser's boat should have been conducted by the American consul to the club.

"My name's Burnham," he had said to Biggar when he had appeared in the doorway of the consulate, "and I'm down here to look after a financial matter. I dropped in on you to get a line on who's who in this center of progress, and perhaps take a peek into the social register."

"Looking for anybody?" asked Biggar when he had bestowed the customary cheroot upon his visitor, and the latter raised his eyes quickly. What he saw in the consul's made him throw up his hand with a laugh.

"All right," he said whimsically. "I see you're awake and kicking. Confidentially, I'm looking for a fellow who was just a little careless with some funds that had been entrusted to him."

Biggar stood up and took his Panama from a peg.

"Come on over to the club and I'll introduce you to some of the fellows worth knowing. There's no need to advertise the fact that you're——"

"I guess we'll say I'm a shoe salesman," the new arrival suggested a little grimly.

"Suit yourself," returned the consul. "I don't mind. There's been no new arrival here in months, so perhaps you'll want to wait."

Seven men loafed comfortably in the deep wicker chairs and sipped from seven long glasses.

"I wonder what particularly fool thing the new chorus up yonder will feel called on to perpetrate," said Jack Manning, the local manager for the Atlas Fruit Company. "It's even betting they'll slap an export tax on pineapples, and then I'll have to reach over and tap them on the wrist."

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He lifted his hand and the Jap replenished his glass.

"I'm offering odds they get into a row with Honduras before three months are out," said Hemenway, the wireless operator, lazily. He was a tall Canadian with a tired drawl and a horrible hunger for curried fish. "There's that boundary dispute old Rosario patched up last year. As soon as the Honduras outfit finds out there's been a change over here, they'll be perfectly safe to open it up again with a machete or a breech-loading can-opener. And this gang is simply spoiling for a fight."

Biggar nodded and stretched his legs out comfortably.

"My last advices tell me that Honduras has picked up a gunboat from the Thornycrofts. If they don't blow it up before they want to use it, we'll be having them stand off out there and pot-shot us," he said cheerfully. "A few shells chucked in here would make this second-act set look like a Swiss cheese. Hello! Who's this?" he finished abruptly, sitting up as running footsteps were heard on the stairway.

"O'Reilly coming for a drink," commented Hemenway.

The photographer dashed into the room with bulging eyes.

"'For th' love av Lucy!'' he cried. "Come out here an' take wan look! Th' worrld is topsy-turvy, an' I lift six nigatives av local beauties sp'ilin' in th' deviloper, below! Tell me, am I nutty?"

THEY crowded to the rail of the gallery and peered into the street. Toward them came an erect figure clad in well-fitting white duck, carefully pipe-clayed shoes, and a white cap. The man walked smartly, but there was an air of indecision in his progress, as if he had but recently arisen from an illness.

"Who is it?" asked Dan Cleveland, shading his eyes.

"Beauchamp, or I'm a liar!" ejaculated Hemenway in an awed voice. "Gracious Mary, what happened?"

The man below glanced up instinctively as he came toward them, feeling the stare of the many eyes, and flushed deeply. He made no sign of recognition, however, to the wondering faces above him, but stepped steadily by without a turn of his head. The others followed him amazedly with their eyes until he turned off down a narrow street that led back from the beach; then they stared at one another, and, wordless, returned to the big room. The man who called himself Burnham remained upon the gallery, looking after Beauchamp. Finally he came inside and looked about.

"How do I get a wireless off from here?" he asked with elaborate carelessness.

"I'm the goat," answered Hemenway. "Hop along over with me."

Five minutes after they had gone, Jim Anderson, who had spent seven years in San Felipe del Monte as port doctor, came in and dropped angrily into a chair.

"Bring me something wet," he ordered, and turned to the others. "I suppose you've heard of the blackguardly slap Sorolla and his minstrel troupe passed us?" he went on gloomily.

"Not a line. What is it?" they chorused.

"That poor devil, Beauchamp, seems to have wandered in where the precious gang of highbinders were celebrating their 'mos' glorious victory.' He was looking for booze, I suppose, and they commissioned him Captain of the Navy!" he finished savagely.

"Navy! What navy?" they demanded.

"That's it! What navy? It's an infernal outrage, and I don't mind telling that monkey on a stick so, either!" Anderson went on wrathfully. "In their drunken orgy they decided to make Rosario's boat, the *Dolores*, the nucleus of a navy. Can you beat it? And—it makes me boil! Poor beggar; it's bad enough to see him kicked about, but I'll be hanged if I want to see him made a stuffed goat for a lot of spiggoty burglars! Every bally town on the coast will laugh at him!"

Biggar filled his pipe slowly and did not look up.

"He passed here a few minutes ago, Doc," he said quietly. "I don't believe you need waste much sympathy on his case. He seems to have had the one jolt that was needed to shove him straight. Somebody trusted him." He paused to apply a match to the black bowl. "You never can tell what queer twists a fellow's brain will take, but it's my idea that Sorolla and his comic opera chorus did us all a mighty good turn. We'd have tried something of the sort if any of us had possessed the refined instincts of a trained hog. Think what that poor devil's been through!"

He looked up as Burnham entered the

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room, and his mouth set in hard lines; the new arrival dropped his keen eyes before the consul's steady gaze.

WHEN the new Government effected a reorientation of itself and its surroundings, which was when the former incumbents' wine-bins were empty, it looked about, individually and collectively, and began to reconstruct the incidents attending the glorious dawn of liberty. Among the first of the dim memories of those fevered days to skip into the mental foreground of President Sorolla was the appointment of Beverley Beauchamp as Commander of the Fleet—count 'em! One!

As he recalled the circumstances, a flush of red stole coyly in and out of his wiry whiskers, and he scuffled with his feet. Somehow, from this sober angle, the navy program did not seem quite so glorious. In fact it bore traces of dangerous absurdity. He clapped his hands to summon an attendant.

There was just a chance that the matter had gone no further than the banquet hall, he thought hopefully. It was also just possible that the *pobrecito diablo* had crept into a corner somewhere and quietly drunk himself away. In any case it would be well to search for that so foolish commission, and to destroy it, *pronto*. Some of these insane foreigners might misconstrue the matter. *Madre de Dios!* yes, they might take umbrage at a thing that made one of their so savage blood ridiculous, even were he but a sodden drunkard. Then who should say? Might there not be cruisers, gunboats, insults and——

The President shrugged his nervous shoulders with a little shiver. He would have the entire army search for this mad señor with the naval commission. Besides, the navy was unnecessary.

III

TO-DAY in San Felipe del Monte they will describe for you the magic birth of Guantepec's navy; they will tell you delightedly what occurred in the estuary of the river that lay below the red roofs and to the south, and how rapidly *El Capitan* Beauchamp did engage a brave crew of ten Caribs and one Mexican, and therewith proceed to drill them in cleanliness and seamanship.

They will smile proudly when they speak of the manner in which the flag of the country, that deep blue emblem with the golden sun at its glorious center, floated from the gaff of the *Dolores* for the first time as she went forth to the sea. And further will they describe delightedly how the Mexican learned to blow upon a dented bugle many strange calls, and at the last did play:

Tier-ra glo-ri-o-sa de lib-er-tad,
Vos-o-tros——

and how that national air provoked all the enthusiasm for the new navy that any patriot could wish.

PRESIDENT SOROLLA was as good as his word. In the shame that beset him, he sent forth the army, and instructed them secretly to search the *cantinas* and the city's purlieus for the mad foreigner. Unfortunately for his excellent intentions, events had transpired a little too quickly for him; he had prolonged the period of celebration beyond the limits set by fate, and when he came to adjust accounts, the new navy had come into actual being and was busy holystoning decks and setting up standing rigging.

Supplies had been promptly furnished at sight of the inspiring commission, and in the very midst of the President's plans for the summary abolition of the marine force of the country, there occurred an interruption. A delegation from the foreign population called to pay its respects, and was admitted to the Executive Presence with great promptitude.

Messrs. Anderson, Biggar, Schmidt and O'Reilly bowed most formally and presented the usual felicitations. President Sorolla executed a jack-knife movement at the waist and smiled. Then Biggar fixed the small, wiry man with his cold eye.

"We have learned with sincere pleasure of the honor your administration has conferred upon our compatriot," he began, and the presidential smile promptly slid around to the back of the presidential neck, where it remained in hiding. "It is a compliment to the foreign residents they will not soon forget!" He paused to let these words sink in, and the president swallowed hard. "In so far as we may assure you of our loyalty and of that of our compatriot,

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we desire to do so, and we are convinced your excellency will see no reason to regret your choice of a commander for the new arm of your service."

That settled it in the presidential mind. He bowed to the will of fate. With a smile that caused him acute agony, he begged to assure the illustrious señors that the appointment had been a matter of deep thought and careful consideration by the entire Cabinet. That they had been divinely guided in their choice was most completely apparent.

When the delegation had departed, he kicked every soldier in the Casa Blanca and chewed the mustaches from the left side of his mouth. The search was ended, of course, and the navy had become an official adjunct to the Sorolla administration. For some reason the Minister of War could never fathom, he had suddenly lost his popularity with his chief, and in a month was compelled to resign his portfolio and retire to the mountain fastnesses for meditation and conspiracy.

IN TWO months' time Beauchamp had brought the navy to such a pitch of perfection that President Sorolla was not above using it as an official carry-all up and down the coast. Two long Parrott guns that had graced the presidential palace were placed fore and aft upon the *Dolores*, and a couple of *mitrailleuses* that had remained unpacked in the *cuartel* also found place upon the snowy decks. But Beauchamp kept rigidly to himself, and flushed when by chance he encountered one of the foreign contingent.

Biggar strolled into the club one afternoon and found Hemenway playing chess with Anderson, while the man Burnham watched them from a corner. The consul rudely swept the men from the board on to the floor and sat down between the players.

"All right. It's too beastly hot even to curse you," complained the Canadian. "What's up?"

"You remember you offered to bet there'd be boundary trouble?" Biggar observed quietly, and the long man nodded. "Well, the fat's in the fire, and I'll bet a cookie against the State of Texas that there'll be trouble. Honduras has moved the frontier monuments!"

"War?" asked Anderson quickly.

"I've come in here to rout you out for the purpose of sending a wireless to the State Department, telling them what's in the wind, and suggesting that if they have a spare cruiser loafing around these parts, it might be a good idea to have it drop in here and leave a card. Personally, I hate to become a target for a lot of red-legged lunatics with big guns in their possession."

"You think it's serious, then?" asked Anderson, and the other nodded.

"Sorolla's no coward when it comes to the pinch, and there's wind of another revolution. If he can stave that off by picking up the Honduran gauntlet, it's ten to one he'll do it. A little fighting will let out the revolutionary fever nicely, and whether he wins or loses, he cinches his job."

THREE days later the sun was rising redly from the sea when San Felipe del Monte was rudely awakened by the sound of a heavy gun. At the same instant the squat tower of the cathedral went down in a shower of dust and shrill screams. Out in the roadstead lay a leaden-colored gunboat with the Honduran ensign flapping at her mast-head. A puff of white smoke from her deck, and the whole seaward end of the *cuartel* disappeared in a shower of splinters.

Boom!

From the estuary there came an answering heavy crash, and a wisp of bluish smoke drifted slowly over the tops of the trees that lined its shore. Then into the open shot the white hull of the *Dolores* with every rag of her snowy canvas set, and the staccato exhaust of her engine cracking like a gatling. As she cleared the river mouth she yawed, and one of the long Parrotts neatly kicked the black funnel of the gunboat overboard. Then she resumed her course and swept forward again.

It is hard for the excitable Latin-American temperament to confine itself to calm gun-sighting at any time, even from a steady shelter on shore, but when you set a saddle-colored gentleman on a rolling deck and let an enemy pot at him in the open, he is likely to shoot very wide indeed.

Whack! went the other Parrott, and the gunboat's foremast disappeared. The *Dolores*, being small and white, and moreover presenting only her somewhat narrow beam for a target, bow on, made the enemy's shooting even more erratic, and the greatest damage done was to the water, where

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the shot from the leaden-colored craft threw up great fountains of spray.

One of the Caribs had the wheel, while Beauchamp did his own gun-pointing. When he had got within half a mile he had knocked a respectable sized hole in the gunboat's stern, and had suffered no damage himself. Then he set his quick-firers to work, and when he had come to within five hundred yards he had made the decks too hot to hold the Honduran crew. The rest of the action was short and assuredly to the point.

The *Dolores* pumped two more neat holes in the hull of the gunboat, and then paid off for the purpose of running astern and raking the enemy along the decks with the machine-guns. Just as the little craft presented a fair broadside, a six-inch gun in an after sponson of the Honduran ship let go and plumped a shell squarely into the diminutive engine-room of the small vessel, where it exploded.

"*O-hél*" was the cry from the enemy.

THE yacht shivered to her keel and heeled over with the terrific shock. The helmsman swung himself on the wheel in response to an order and brought the boat up in the wind, where she hung for an instant slatting her canvas. Then she paid off on the other tack and plunged forward toward the bow of the gunboat.

Bang! went a forward gun on the larger craft, and the whole side of the small yacht seemed to vanish inward. Again she reeled with the blow and began to settle, and Beauchamp caught the wheel himself and put it over, bearing now directly down upon the high bow of the enemy as it rose and fell in the sea.

Relinquishing the wheel, he swung open the breech of one of the big guns, heaved in a shell, and slammed the block shut again. He sighted carefully, and as the *Dolores* rose on a long swell, pulled the lanyard. The heavy shot struck just forward of the gunboat's bridge and raked her from there to the after deckhouse, leaving a mass of splinters and wreckage in its path.

Shouting an order, he seized the helm himself and sent his crew forward. There was one desperate chance and he took it. He drove his sinking vessel down upon the heaving bulk of the steamer, and as he neared her, put down his wheel and brought the yacht around in a long, trembling, wavering arc, until with a heave she crashed against the port bow of the big craft!

The half-naked Caribs, dripping with sweat and looking more like musical comedy pirates than anything else, leaped and caught the low bulwarks of the gunboat with the agility of monkeys. The Mexican, with bugle slung about his swarthy neck and grinning fiercely, was chucked aboard by his commander, while Beauchamp, with a long, black revolver dangling from a strap at his wrist, just managed to clutch the rail of the gunboat as his little *Dolores* sank from beneath him. Tucked in his waistband he bore the flag of Guantepec, cut from the halyards at the last moment.

There was a Colt one-pounder on the fore-deck of the enemy's craft, and this the boarding crew swung about with a cheer until it pointed aft. A few quick turns of the handle and the gun merrily banged a ragged line of holes in the forward deckhouse below the bridge, which immediately spewed forth a group of frightened, screaming, red-legged, mustached soldiers, who, chattering sounds faster than the machine-gun could vomit shells, reached for the high heavens with wildly clawing fingers.

IV

THE rest is soon told. The German captain, filled with disgust at the scene before him, of which he had been an unwilling witness, gloomed in a corner by himself and smoked. He had been hired to navigate alone. The boat had held seventy men, and of these the guns of the little *Dolores* had accounted for twelve; eleven others were wounded by splinters and flying ironwork, and the remainder wished nothing quite so much as to get behind something on shore.

Within ten minutes the entire crew of the gunboat was neatly lashed along her rails, and the blue and gold flag of Guantepec was snapping from the masthead. Slowly the vessel gathered way and swung her nose toward San Felipe del Monte, while Beverley Beauchamp, with a tired grin on his blackened face leaned against the bulwarks.

On shore the entire population of the town had gathered along the white beach to view the struggle, with exclamations and fears. Now the President, accompanied by the Secretary of State, both of whom

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had been careering up and down the sands, dashed in the direction of a surf-boat pulled up on the strand. As this was launched, Sorolla turned to Biggar and Doctor Anderson.

"Shall it please you, señors, to accompany me to the scene of thees mos' glorious victory? Your compatriot is uphol' the honor of our lan'! Eet ees fit to him that he s'all receive your tears!"

Lined up at the gangway of the gunboat stood the grinning Caribs, each with his hand at the salute. As the President and his party stepped proudly aboard, the Mexican gathered the battered bugle from his neck and blew lustily the national anthem.

The instrument blared, and the President removed his hat with a grandiloquent flourish. Tears coursed down his dark cheeks and mingled with his wiry whiskers. Flinging his arms about Beauchamp he kissed him furiously upon both cheeks.

"*Por Dios, por libertad!*" he sobbed noisily. "Savior of our countree, señor, the worl' ees yours! Our children s'all learn of thees great victory in the book of the history *por siempre!*"

Beverley Beauchamp looked at him curiously, and quietly toppled over upon the deck. Anderson opened the white uniform jacket and regarded the growing red spot upon the shirt. President Sorolla bent forward.

"He is woun' ver' bad?" he inquired anxiously, and Anderson shook his head.

"No. It's just a rifle-ball through the shoulder. He'll be around in a week or so, but we'd better get him ashore."

AS THEY lifted Beauchamp out of the surf-boat upon the beach a bright object dropped from his clothing. Manning picked it up.

"What's that?" asked Hemenway.

Manning turned it over in his hand. It was a small bronze cross with a bit of ribbon attached. On the front of it in small letters was engraved the words, "For Valour."

Manning looked up with a queer gleam in his eyes.

"Why, that's the Victoria Cross!" he said slowly.

Burnham came along the beach quickly and pushed his way to the side of the group where Beauchamp lay unconscious upon the sand. His eyes met Biggar's, and the consul's face took on a strange steely look. He stepped up quickly to the keen-faced man and touched him on the chest.

"Did I understand you to say you were a detective?" he asked.

Burnham looked into the other's eyes for some seconds, then he stepped back, and quietly removing a badge from his shirt, dropped it into his trousers pocket, and mumbled:

"Who, me? Why—er—no. I guess I'm representing the—er Excelsior Biscuit and Fruitcake Company."

He turned and walked away in the direction whence he had come.

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King Corrigan's Treasure

by

H. D. Couzens

SYNOPSIS—Harvey Winthrop, visiting his sister in Honolulu, is shanghaied aboard the schooner *Albicore*. The captain having scuttled and abandoned ship to get the insurance, Winthrop stays aboard, plugs the holes, and, when the captain turns back from a rescuing steamer, sends him off provisioned, after taking the ship's papers and three men to work her. Several days later they pick up a surf-boat with Billy Englehart, his mate Jim Carncross, and twelve Kanakas, whose schooner has been lost in a quest for the treasure of "King" Corrigan, an Irishman who had risen to power on the island of Motuahi and finally been lost at sea with a ship-load of treasure, only two of his native crew escaping, one of them having told Englehart where the wreck lies. It is decided to pursue the quest in the *Albicore*, with Winthrop as owner and Englehart and Carncross as captain and mate. Arriving at Paradise Island, where the treasure-wreck lies, they find the schooner *Kestrel*, previously spoken—Paul Anson (captain), Pratt (mate), and Doctor Marvin, in charge, all unsavory characters; an unknown girl as passenger. The *Albicore's* crew refuse to be bluffed off. Winthrop meets the girl on shore and finds she is Corrigan's daughter Anita, ignorant of his death, looking for her father, not realizing the villainy of the *Kestrel's* people. Marvin and Anson see in her a claim to the treasure, and the latter really loves her. Anson interrupts her second meeting with Winthrop, loses out in a tense scene with him, and is prevented by the more dangerous but politic Marvin from shooting him in the back as he departs. In an ugly scene with Anson, Anita begins to realize her danger and decides to camp on shore with her old colored maid. Winthrop at the beach takes an idle shot at a lump of coral; a boat puts off from each schooner; Anson runs toward the sound.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BEGINNING OF HOSTILITIES

THERE were three boats hauled up on the beach, one a yawl in which Miss Corrigan had come ashore; near it one of the *Kestrel's* surf-boats, her crew of four men sunning themselves on their backs in the sand. Some two hundred and fifty yards away was the *Albicore's* dingey, which Harvey Winthrop was calmly shoving off when another boat put off from each of the anchored vessels.

Winthrop, in the business of getting the heavy little boat under way, observed nothing, either on sea or land, till he heard a shot and a bullet whistled by uncomfortably close to his head. Doctor Marvin, who had cut diagonally across the island on leaving Anson and Miss Corrigan, was kneeling on one knee in a little nook of sand and firing deliberately from an elbow rest. The little Doctor was as unruffled as though shooting at a paper target, and something cold struck at Winthrop's heart.

In that instant, with the whistling of the bullet, there came to him in full force the deadly purpose in what these men were

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striving for, and the careless enjoyment with which he had followed his adventure from the beginning left him, never to return. The elation of man-to-man struggle with a great prize for reward is one thing; to be hunted and shot at like an animal is quite another.

This was no joy of adventure, no stirring of the blood at breaking away to freedom from convention; but a fight for dollars by desperate men in a place where necessity knew no law and, as Anson had tritely said, might made right.

A kind of rage took hold of him, quite different from the self-assurance that had carried him through his recent encounter with Anson. He wanted to kill the man who was so coolly intent on taking his life. He became, on the instant, a player of the game of life and death as it is played on lawless beaches.

He drew the revolver he had tested a few minutes before, aimed at the Doctor and rapidly fired the remaining charges in the cylinder, but the bullets went wide, merely plowing up puffs of sand. While doing this he unwisely rose to a half-standing position. There came a shot from another quarter and his leather cap spun from his head. He was not hurt. The bullet did not touch him. He looked round and saw, in a cloud of birds, Anson, with his rifle to his shoulder. In the same glance he also saw four of Anson's sailors, armed with rifles, running toward him along the beach.

THE whole lagoon woke to sudden noise. He heard shots behind him, saw Doctor Marvin suddenly running in retreat and two of the sailors pitch forward in the sand. There was a fusillade exchanged between the two ships' boats and then he saw the two remaining sailors, with Anson and Marvin, running for their own boat. He was rowing the dingey toward the *Albicore* with every ounce of strength he possessed when he heard a shout behind him.

"Stand by to pass a line there, lad!" called Carncross, as he swung the steering-oar to turn the boat in a short arc.

Harvey passed the bow line and Carncross made it fast. The crew of four Kanakas bent to their oars while Harvey resumed rowing the dingey to ease a part of the dead strain on the other boat. From the tail of his eye he saw the two *Kestrel* boats cutting across diagonally between them and the *Albicore* to intercept them.

"Pull, you bullies! *Hoki!* or by thunder they'll cut us off!" cried Carncross.

Hampered as they were by the towing dingey, they were making but slow progress and the other boats were gaining. Harvey heard another shot from one of them, then a cry from the *Albicore's* boat and a loud, vicious oath from Carncross. Looking back over his shoulder he saw that the rower in the bow had fallen forward and the oar was slipping from his hands.

"Hop in here, Mr. Winthrop, and we'll cast off the dingey," said Carncross. But now there was firing from the *Albicore* and presently a cry of relief from the mate.

"All right; stay where you are," said he. "Billy's got them on the run."

In the first boat from the *Kestrel* two men had sagged down between the thwarts and both boats now turned and made for their own schooner.

TEN minutes later they were aboard the *Albicore* and their boat was hoisted aboard with the dead body of the sailor, who was no other than the Motuahi boy with the ivory nose-piece who had given Englehart the story of the treasure. They saw the *Kestrel's* men board their own vessel and, for the time being, peace once more settled down on the lagoon.

Englehart was sitting on the house, a rifle across his knees and a gleam of quiet joy in his light gray eyes.

"Well," said he, "the row's begun. But what was it started the fireworks? We heard that shot of yours, but no one chanced to be looking shoreward just then. First we knew we saw Marvin trying to pot you and then you turn loose your artillery. The wonder is he didn't get you at the start. He's a pretty fatal shot."

Harvey, with an inward feeling of rather boyish guilt, told first of his experience with Anson and finally, not sparing himself, of the experimental shot. Englehart made no comment on this episode beyond a chuckle at Harvey's "record," but at the conclusion he sat thinking for several minutes.

"There's a point or two in this I don't quite see, son. You see, I know these men and their methods. Where was Marvin when you were serenely sticking up friend Paul?"

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"I don't know. I didn't see him until he began shooting at me."

"H'm! Well, he was ashore, hovering somewhere close by, you bet. The wonder is he didn't get you while you were talking to Anson. Strikes me you ought to have a kind of 'Thank God!' feeling at being once more in our midst, Winthrop. You say this woman was close by at the time?"

"She wasn't in sight, but I don't think she could have been very far away."

"Son, I can't get it clear. There were three of them against you—Marvin, Anson and the woman. What the devil was it Anson got so hot about if it wasn't to pick a row? They were keen enough to abolish you after you fired that fool shot. Anson meant business when he sent your cap spinning overside. And what about the woman? You haven't been trying to steal part of Anson's assorted harem, have you, my gay young Lothario?"

Winthrop flushed, cleared his throat, then hesitated.

"Why, Billy, I want to tell you about that. It's the most amazing thing about this whole affair. That girl is King Corrigan's daughter!"

"The —— you say!"

"Fact! At least that's what she told me. She took passage with Anson to try and find him. Moreover, I believe she is a fine, good woman." Englehart uttered a prolonged whistle, but Harvey raised his hand. "Wait! It was at this other island, this Mo—Motuahi, that she expected to find her father, of course, and it was there that Anson learned about the loss of the old man's ship, and the treasure—from Marvin, apparently. He may have picked up the other Kanaka who escaped from the wreck, but at any rate Miss Corrigan doesn't know anything about the treasure. She doesn't even know that her father is dead. That's what Anson was sore about. He was afraid I had been putting her wise."

ENGLEHART'S expression had been growing more and more mystified. He looked at Winthrop with his brows puckered into knots.

"Then will you tell me, my son, why she doesn't know, and if she doesn't, what the devil she is doing aboard that schooner? It don't stand to reason any way you look at it. The woman's been stringing you."

"I tell you it isn't so," said Winthrop, a little hotly. "She isn't that kind of a woman."

"Then, by——, what is she doing aboard Paul Anson's ship? Why you've seen enough of the scurvy gang yourself. Why should he cumber himself with a decent woman who could *stay* decent, especially, above all women, Corrigan's daughter? Do you think this part of the universe is a playground for young maiden tourists? Why should he—oh, ——!"

"I give it up, Billy, but I'm going to find the answer. The fact remains that Anson asked me if I had told her anything about the treasure or Corrigan, and that Miss Corrigan thinks the hunt is still on for her dad. I can't make it out, unless—by George!" He fumbled for a cigarette, lit it, and paced a few rapid steps back and forth. "Billy, I believe he's in love with her."

Englehart snorted.

"Boy, you've got plenty of sand; I'll grant you that. You've shown it more than once. It took sand to stick up old Tobe Cleary the way you did, and it took sand to stick up Paul Anson, too, for when all's said, Paul is a rough customer. Your nerve's carried you through for the fun of it, but this game's a lot deeper than that. One or two incidents don't win out. You've got to be on the job all the time and you need a lot more salting down before you're fit to play even with Anson and his woman friends."

And Englehart walked forward in a huff.

Winthrop, quite unruffled, got the glass from the cabin. During the running fight of the boats and later, after he had boarded the *Albicore*, he had seen, some distance away, standing and watching, a lone figure in white. Anson, Marvin and the two remaining sailors of their boat had gone aboard the *Kestrel*. Therefore Miss Corrigan must be alone on the island.

Now he saw her again. She had come down to the beach and was kneeling in the sand, bandaging the head of one of the sailors who had been shot. The other man was lying quite convincingly still, face downward.

PRESENTLY a boat put off from the *Kestrel*. To his surprise Harvey saw a woman in it. Through the glass he saw that she was dark; a Kanaka, he thought, till suddenly he remembered

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Minnie, Miss Corrigan's maid whom she had brought from Virginia and who would probably be a colored woman. When the boat grounded, the maid stepped ashore and came along the beach toward her mistress, while the crew took from the boat a great heap of canvas and an assortment of tins and odds and ends.

These they carried off in the opposite direction till they came to the highest point of the island, a knoll about a quarter of a mile beyond the *Kestrel*. With them stalked the tall figure of Anson, his rifle still in the crook of his arm.

Watching them curiously, Harvey saw the men set about erecting a couple of tents in the shelter of the knoll, Anson standing by and directing the work. In a surprisingly short time it was done. Half an hour more was spent in making a clearing and disposing of the tins and implements while part of the men were apparently arranging a large roll of bedding in the tents; then they all came back along the beach.

The maid had brought a bundle of what appeared to be feminine attire, and Anson took this and walked with the two women toward the tents. Some of his crew carried the wounded sailor to the boat while the rest dug a grave for the dead man, at the upper level where it would be beyond the water-line, and in it, when it was done, they laid the body of their late comrade.

It was a weird enough burial, the inquisitive birds flying about overhead, the waves the only requiem. There was no attempt at gentleness in handling the body; the sand was thrown in in haste and packed down, the men turning from the grave with never a look back, and Winthrop had a moment's uncanny feeling that his own fate might be something very similar in a very short time.

Anson placed the bundle in one of the tents, stood talking a while to Miss Corrigan, then took her hand, held it a moment and came, walking briskly, back to the boat. There was something businesslike in his step, and when he took his place in the stern the men bent to the oars and sent the boat back to the *Kestrel* at racing speed. It was evident that the women were to be left ashore for the present, and Winthrop wondered why.

The sun was nearing the horizon, a great ball of Mars, orange with streaks of purple cloud across its face. The wind was still fresh and the scud flying overhead like homing sheep. It would be dark in half an hour. Suddenly there was a crashing roar on the *Kestrel* and a prodigious puff of smoke leaped from her side. The whole top of Paradise Island seemed to lift off as the bird colony took screaming flight in a body; and half of the *Albicore's* skylight went spinning away in splinters. A voice from the *Kestrel* called through a megaphone:

"Time's up! Clear out of this lagoon!"

CHAPTER XVII

WINTHROP GOES ASHORE

HARVEY dodged instinctively as the shot flew past, but Englehart, who had just come aft, leaped to the rail.

"Hallo!" said he. "Paul's getting impatient. Afraid we're not going to obey orders promptly. This will never do."

They could plainly see them serving the brass gun on the *Kestrel*. Another shot flew humming overhead. Englehart gaged the distance between the two schooners and sighted his rifle, which had been lying on the house.

"Too bad," said he, laying it down again; "it's too far for rifle-practise. We can never pick them off with this sea jumping us about. It's a good eight hundred and fifty yards. Time we were moving. Jim, break out the anchor and make sail, then stand by with the lead; lively now! It's getting too sultry here."

The crew strained at windlass and halyards. Englehart himself took the wheel. Another shot or two whistled uncomfortably close overhead. When the mainsail and forestaysail had been set and the anchor broken out the bombardment suddenly ceased. Englehart laughed.

"He thinks we're turning tail and going to run for it. He'll see his mistake in a minute. Lie down there, everybody!"

He turned to Winthrop, who still stood leaning against the house.

"Better get down and hug the deck, Winthrop," said he.

Winthrop had cringed at each of the shots with a tingling impulse to make himself as small as possible, but he looked at the stocky captain standing quietly at the wheel, watching the sails draw without a glance behind him.

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"I guess I can stand it if you can," said he.

"Suit yourself," said Englehart, but the gleam in his eye grew a little brighter and the corner of his mustache raised a trifle. Harvey was looking back at the two tents, only the tops of which were now visible, and at two figures that were climbing the knoll. One of them, in white, reached the summit first and stood there looking, her eyes shaded with her hand.

"Jim," said Englehart, "get forrard with the lead. Ah! I thought so!"

THE schooner was forging ahead and they had passed the channel instead of starting the sheets and reaching through. There was another roar from the gun, a splintering aloft and the gaff split two-thirds of the distance from the mast and the peak of the sail collapsed like the crippled wing of a bird. But in the strong breeze it did not materially affect the schooner's progress.

"Humph!" said Englehart, "they're shooting at the birds. Either that gun kicks like a two-dollar trade-gun or they don't allow for the roll. They ought to get it on the downward swing."

"What are you going to do?" asked Harvey.

"Move off a little down the beach; that's all. Quarters are a little cramped at this anchorage."

"What's to prevent the *Kestrel* making sail, coming after us, and blowing us out of water? She can sail two feet to our one."

"Why, in the first place, if they get close enough to do any damage in this choppy sea, with their dinky little gun, we can pick them off with rifles. In the second, it will be dark in twenty minutes and we'd both pile up on the reef or the beach in no time if we tried meandering around in the dark. I was counting on this move of Anson's and that's why I hung on till the last minute; exactly so he couldn't chase us out of the channel."

Whatever the reason of the poor marksmanship, they were not destined to be seriously hurt by the *Kestrel's* gun. With Carncross heaving the lead continually, Englehart worked the *Albicore* down to the far end of the lagoon, where they came to anchor.

"There," said he, as the schooner swung to her cable. "At this range and this sea on they can pop away all they please. We're as safe as if we were home in the little brick church. Jim, tell the cook to rustle up some grub. I'm as hungry as a shark."

While he and Carncross were stowing away pie and hot coffee in the cabin, Winthrop came below, after a last look through the glass, and sat down at the table. He slowly poured himself a cup of coffee and stirred in the coarse brown sugar. He looked from Carncross to Englehart with a kind of hesitation quite unusual with him.

"Billy," said he, "I'm going ashore for a while."

Englehart set down his empty cup and stared.

"So!" said he.

"Yes, in the dingey. I sha'n't be gone long, but I must go."

"Might I ask," said Englehart politely, "that you do me the kindness to tell me what the —— you're talking about?"

"Yes, I'll tell you, Billy. You saw them take those two women ashore. Well, I'm going to get them and bring them aboard the *Albicore*."

Englehart's face turned a dark red.

"What the——"

"Wait a minute, Billy. That girl is Corrigan's daughter. I've told you I believe her to be a good woman, but I didn't tell you that I'm more interested in her than that. I'm more fond of her than any woman I've ever met in my life, and I'm no chump about women, either. I'm not going to butt in on the treasure part and the rights of anybody, because that's your lay; but, Billy, I'm not going to leave her there to the mercy of those brutes Anson and Marvin. I want to offer her the protection of decent white men and gentlemen. That's my idea, old man."

ENGLEHART rose and paced up and down the short length of the cabin. Finally he stopped opposite Winthrop, emphasizing his remarks by pointing with the stem of his pipe.

"Young man, do you know what all that gunnery practise we had to-day means? It means that Anson's going to try to make good his threats and we've either got to leave or stay on the job and get on his weather side. He will strike to-night, too, as sure as I'm standing here talking to you, and for any one of us to go foraging around on shore now is the rankest —— nonsense.

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Don't be a fool, Winthrop! I don't want to remind you that in squibbing off your gun to-day you've already made one record, but it's so. What's more, those women are a plagued sight safer ashore than they'll be if there is any manslaughter going on aboard this schooner. I've got a scheme in order for meeting Anson more than half way, but I must have you here or it will go up in smoke. If you're ashore they'll find you and murder you out of hand."

"Nevertheless, I'm going, unless you say positively it means certain death, in which case you'll find me sane enough. I tell you I won't be gone but a little while. Now how much time can you give me?"

"I'll give you no time at all, but I'll give you a first-class piece of advice. Stay aboard."

And Billy disappeared on deck, followed by Carncross.

"Jim," said Englehart, as the two seamen stood together at the bow rail, "what the devil am I going to do with this young chap? For two cents I'd clap the cuss under hatches, if I wasn't afraid he'd get his back up and burn the ship or spoil the show in some way."

"Seems likely enough to do it as it is," grumbled Carncross. "Say the word and I'll truss him up good and tight till time for action."

"No, it would break his heart, and I like the boy. I like his nerve. I'm sorry he's got this woman in his head. According to argument, she's no better than she should be, but Winthrop's got me nearly convinced that he is right about her. If it's so, she oughtn't to be in Paul's clutches, or that fiend Marvin's."

He looked around at the waning daylight with a practised eye.

"Jim, there's a good deal of time to spare. Anson won't strike till it's pitch black. I guess we'll have to give the boy a chance."

Only a thin rim of the sun, like a shaving of copper was showing above the horizon as Harvey appeared on deck, and presently this disappeared. He was well aware that he had planned an unwise and foolhardy thing from one point of view, but his morning's experience had made him unwontedly headstrong.

The girl's undoubted honesty and innocence, the ferocity in Anson's eyes and the deliberate attempt to murder him by both Anson and Marvin as he sat in the boat confirmed him in his purpose. He was not sure of his exact feeling toward Anita Corrigan, but it was strong enough to induce him to go against the advice and wishes of Englehart, which he would never have done on any ordinary occasion.

"Mr. Nolan," said he to the second mate, "lower away the dingey."

Darkness was coming on rapidly, but before leaving he looked carefully toward the *Kestrel*. At their present distance from each other it was not possible, he decided, to see a small boat with the naked eye and it would soon be dark enough to obscure his movements entirely. As he was shoving off from the schooner's side Englehart leaned over the rail.

"If you can make it in an hour, Winthrop, it may be all right," said he, not unkindly, "but whatever you do be back in that time or sooner. There are men's lives at stake, my son."

Harvey looked at his watch and nodded.

"All right, Billy," he said. "I'll make it, sure."

CHAPTER XVIII

MISS CORRIGAN DECIDES

ON REACHING the shore he had about a mile and a half to go which he could cover in a short time by running in the open places, but he would have to show some very convincing arguments, and if they prevailed it would be slower coming back with the women.

And now he began to wonder whether he was on a fool's errand. What could he say to a girl he had spoken to but twice to convince her that her apparent friends were her enemies, and *vice versa?* After all, was she not safer ashore, as Englehart had said, than where there might be fighting? She seemed capable of taking care of herself in any case, and it occurred to him that she would probably consider him an officious ass, to be sent about his business.

He found the way rougher than he expected, for the beach was not all open. There were outcroppings of coral, either jagged or slimy with weed, and in places the sand was covered to the water's edge with a tenacious, ivy-like creeper in the toils of which he repeatedly tripped and fell. At times he became confused and lost

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his way, for it was pitch dark, not even a star showing through the dense clouds that had gathered after sunset.

He was often tempted to strike a match till he thought of the expedient of keeping to the water itself as a guide. At last, after what seemed an hour, at least, but was far less, he saw a spark of light ahead. It was shining through the flap of a tent behind which, as he drew near, he could hear voices.

Breathless and panting he stood outside and called:

"Miss Corrigan! Oh, Miss Corrigan!"

Instantly the voices ceased and the tent-flap was thrown open. The light of a large lantern streamed out, half-blinding him for a moment. He saw a rather cozy interior in which, on a thick bed of blankets, Miss Corrigan was sitting and regarding him with a startled expression. The maid, a mulatto with somber eyes, which now held a look of fear, was holding back the canvas.

"It is Winthrop, Miss Corrigan," said Harvey, stepping aside from the zone of light that he might not be seen from the *Kestrel;* "may I see you for a moment?"

"Why—er—" the girl was deftly arranging her hair and shifting hairpins— "I suppose so. Come in, Mr. Winthrop."

"No; I'd rather you'd come outside—please. Don't be alarmed," he laughed reassuringly, "I'm on an errand of peace."

The girl stepped to the doorway and looked out.

"Where are you?" she asked.

"Here! Please come with me a little way and talk quite low. Voices carry a long distance over the water. Your maid may come, if you like."

THEY walked on a short way in the darkness, the maid, unbidden, hovering watchfully in the rear. A projecting rock caught Miss Corrigan's foot and she clutched at him for support. He held her for a single instant, his arms half about her, and felt her hair against his face. He caught his breath. The girl drew back sharply.

"What is it, Mr. Winthrop?"

"Miss Corrigan, there is no time to waste. I've come to ask you, to beg you, if I must, to come with me aboard the *Albicore.* I know you're going to ask me to explain and I'll try and be as convincing as possible. You are staying aboard a vessel where a girl—a lady of—of your kind has no right to be never and should have been——"

"Just at present I'm staying ashore, Mr. Winthrop, and I must say that I don't understand you in the least."

"Miss Corrigan, I won't speak of what has brought these two schooners here. They are both here for the same purpose, which in its way is honest enough. As they are both here, however, it seems that some fighting is necessary, though we offered to divide interests with Captain Anson and he refused, which was his perfect right. This morning he and Doctor Marvin tried to murder me——"

"Oh!" Miss Corrigan gave a little cry. "I know, I know, Mr. Winthrop! And there has been murder enough, and more. Two of our men have been killed and two are dreadfully hurt. And I saw it all. It has been a terrible day—terrible!"

She hid her face in her hands and shuddered. Harvey saw that he was on the wrong tack and chafed at the delay.

"Listen, please! I said that a certain amount of fighting was necessary. Fair fighting is justifiable sometimes; at least it is unavoidable. Fighting to steal something from a girl is another matter."

"What do you mean?"

"Miss Corrigan, I said this morning, you may remember, that the answer to a certain question had some bearing on your future and mine. I could not tell you why then for a very good reason; I should have shocked and hurt you. I must take the risk now. I understand that you are the daughter of the man known as King Corrigan."

"Yes."

"Very well, Miss Corrigan, I must tell you that your father is dead. He died in a shipwreck at this island and in this very lagoon." He paused, expecting some sign of grief, and cursing his own brutality, but she made no sign save a little catching of her breath. "Have I shocked you terribly?"

"No. Captain Anson told me a part of it this morning, but not quite the way you are telling it. Go on, please."

"Did Captain Anson tell you that we are all here for the purpose of fishing your father's treasure, which is enormous, out of this lagoon?"

The girl was silent for a long moment.

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Then she stepped nearer and laid her hand on his arm.

"Is that the truth, Mr. Winthrop? Are you quite sure, about the *Kestrel*, too?"

"Absolutely. If Anson has not told you, I leave you to draw your own conclusion as to why he has omitted it. One more question, Miss Corrigan. You remarked that I did not look like a ruffian, evidently comparing me with some estimate of Anson's. Do you believe me to be a gentleman or not? In other words, do you believe my motives at present are decent and honorable or otherwise?"

"I—I believe in you, Mr. Winthrop."

"Thank you! I am glad of that. Then please think of me for the moment as a chum with whom you have shared your cigarettes and tell me—it is an odd question, but necessary just now—do you chance to see any difference between Anson and me that is in my favor?"

NOW Anita Corrigan, between the distractions of the shooting episodes, had done more tumultuous thinking that day than she had since she began her voyage on the *Kestrel*. There are some women with whom the boldest and most calloused Don Juan will hesitate to take liberties. Had they been alone, it might have been different; but they were not alone on Anson's schooner, even though he held his crew with an iron hand. Also, Paul Anson had, for once in his abandoned life, found a woman who compelled his respect. Therefore he had schooled himself well and appeared at his not unattractive best.

But that morning he had stood forth without the mask, shorn of his assumed virtues by his own shearing, and for the first time Anita understood. She had thought that whatever the quarrel might be between the two schooners, at least she and Minnie were sure of protection, but with the understanding came the realization of her utter loneliness and helplessness. She was not easily frightened, but more than once her thoughts had turned to the young man with the straightforward eyes whom she had seen fearlessly confronting Anson in a quarrel which she felt intuitively concerned herself.

"Mr. Winthrop, will you come into the tent—into the light with me for a moment, please?"

He followed her within the lighted tent and they stood facing each other. She looked into his eyes earnestly, doubt and trouble in her own, and then again she laid her hand on his arm.

"Mr. Winthrop, can you tell me why Captain Anson never told me about my father or the truth about this treasure?"

"I don't know, but I have an idea. He and Marvin were going to take the treasure, and Anson would not let you know or share it with you except—except under conditions."

"What conditions?"

Harvey looked at her, then looked away, silent and uncomfortable.

"Oh!" said the girl; "I—I understand!"

"Miss Anita, this is a queer corner of the world. It is a place where a man may let all the baseness of his nature run riot if he chooses, and there are depths of baseness in some men that are unspeakable and almost unbelievable. I am only beginning to understand about it myself. For instance, Doctor Marvin used to torture children in the Model Prison in Tasmania. Imagine the mental processes of a man like that. My own friends are adventurers, as I am at present, but they are men whose liking and respect I am proud to own. I know you don't know me—very well, but I believe you to be in need of protection and I ask you to take me on trust and accept this protection on board our schooner."

Anita turned to her maid.

"Minnie," she said, "you've heard what Mr. Winthrop said. Shall we go to the other schooner?"

Minnie had been darkly studying Winthrop with her deep, somber eyes. At another time the scrutiny might have made him uncomfortable.

"I tole you befoah, Miss Nita, I done think dey's somepin' fishy 'bout Cap'n Anson. An' dat Doctah Mahvin gives me de shivuhs."

"Mr. Winthrop, when you were talking with Captain Anson this morning I turned back and watched where I couldn't be seen. I did not hear what was said, but I saw Captain Anson threaten you with his rifle, and what you did. When you had gone he deliberately turned and was about to shoot you in the back when Doctor Marvin stopped him. His explanation for shooting at you in the boat was that you had tried to kill Doctor Marvin."

She looked at him again, steadily, for another moment.

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"Mr. Winthrop," she said, "Minnie and I will trust ourselves to you and your friends."

Harvey looked at his watch. He had been gone from the *Albicore* an hour and twelve minutes!

CHAPTER XIX

THE *KESTREL* GAINS A POINT

THREE more precious minutes were wasted while Minnie made small parcels of essentials. She was about to turn out the light when Winthrop, on a sudden inspiration, bade her leave it burning. Afterward he was to be glad of this impulse. They walked slowly at first till their eyes were adjusted to the darkness. Then they ran, hand in hand, on the clear, hard shingle. At the more rugged spots both women tucked up their skirts to their knees and they took to the shallow, hissing wash.

They had covered half of the way to the dingey and were walking noiselessly in loose sand, when Harvey suddenly pulled the women to a halt.

"What's that?" said he, in a sharp whisper.

They listened breathlessly and again he heard, very faintly, what seemed the muffled creak of an oar and a slight splash. They crouched down in the sand and Harvey threw himself flat, peering with straining eyes out over the lagoon. There was a vague, ghostly shine on the sea, hardly visible, yet enough so to confuse the sight; but far off on the horizon, where the pall of cloud had lifted, there was a thin streak, not to be called light, but of lesser darkness, where the sky showed through.

Harvey, lying flat and staring till his eyeballs ached, saw something, not far from shore, suddenly fall into and blot out this streak. It was the silhouetted, swaying heads of rowing men.

He rose to his feet.

"Listen!" said he in a hurried whisper, "it is the *Kestrel's* boats. They are going to take the *Albicore*. I must run ahead and try to give the alarm. Wait here, and if I'm not back in an hour, go back to the tent."

He turned and raced at full speed, blindly, desperately. Haste was the main thing, for if Anson's crew once gained the deck of the *Albicore* there could be only one result. So thinking, he leaped forward, his foot struck the edge of a slimy rock, turned, and he plunged forward, headforemost, his head colliding with a lump of loose coral.

HE WAS shocked and stunned, but by a supreme effort of will brought his scattering senses together and sat up. Sharp agonies shot through him and a sudden, sickening pain in his leg warned him that he had wrenched his ankle. A warm stream of blood was flowing down over his face. He got slowly to his feet, but a wave of nausea shook him as he set his injured foot to the ground. Walking, much less running, was out of the question for the time being and he slumped down into the sand.

There was a little scream and Anita's voice:

"Who is that? Is that you, Mr. Winthrop? Are you hurt?"

"Yes, worse luck. Turned my ankle and got a crack on the head. I'm out of the running."

Instantly she was on her knees beside him. She felt the blood on his face and gasped, but did not flinch.

"Oh! You are terribly cut! And your leg, too; is it broken?"

"I don't think so. I don't believe I've any damages that a little cold water won't make right. It's rough on poor Billy and Jim, though—and Cigarette and Cookie, not to speak of the Kanakas. They'll c—catch it, I'm afraid. Oh, Lord!"

He was a trifle hysterical.

The girl at once became the cool and practical nurse. She began to unlace the shoe on the swelling foot.

"Minnie," said she, "dig a little hole in the sand—here, where it is moist. Is there anything Minnie or I could do," she asked of Winthrop, "for them, I mean? Shall we go on and try to warn them?"

"Too late, Miss Anita. There isn't much to do now but wait for the finish. We sha'n't have long to wait."

The girl gently removed his shoe.

"Now put that foot in the water. Goodness, Minnie, that'll do! I didn't tell you to dig a pond."

A pool of water had formed at once in the hole in the sand and Harvey put his aching foot in it, while Anita with a soaking handkerchief bathed his face and head. He gasped at the touch of the stinging salt

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water, but it revived him immediately. When she had bound his head with a strip of something which he heard her tear from somewhere he felt quite himself again.

"Thanks," said he. "I'm quite fit again." He sat silent for a while, thinking, thinking. Once before that day he had come near to wrecking Englehart's well-ordered plans. What would be the result of this second folly? He could not now hide from himself the fact that the women would, as the wise and foreseeing Englehart had said, be safe enough till morning. He thought bitterly of their own few paltry arms and Anson's lawless crew, all armed and equipped and spoiling for a fight, and shivered. "Poor devils!" he said aloud, almost involuntarily.

"Don't!" said Anita quickly. "Don't, Mr. Winthrop. You did your best. Your friends can find no fault, and I don't think it right of you to blame yourself. Don't forget one thing, I beg of you, Mr. Winthrop—that so far to-night you have played the part of a gallant and chivalrous gentleman!"

Harvey choked.

"God bless you for that!" said he. "I needed it. I—I sha'n't forget!" Presently he turned to her with an assumption of his usual manner. "Miss Anita, I've done one or two reckless, not to say foolish, things of late, and now I'm going to do another. I'm going to smoke a cigarette. I never needed one more in my life. I believe, if you stand here and hold your skirt as wide as you can, I can light it without its being seen."

SHE stood as he told her and he lit a match, guarding it jealously in his cupped palm and, instantly the cigarette was ignited, blew it out. She sat down beside him.

"It is so dark, and the situation so exciting that I believe if you have another I'd like one, too."

He lit one from his own and passed it to her. His inside nerves were wrought to a tremendous pitch at the impending conflict and Anita's hand trembled as it touched his.

"What do you suppose they will do?" she asked.

"God knows! I can't help feeling a small glimmer of hope. I'm not used to the game as they play it down here, but I have a prodigious faith in Captain Englehart. He is a man. I've never known one so cocksure who would invariably do the right thing in the right place. If any man can pull out of this, he can. If he is licked, Anson will certainly know he has been in a fight."

Suddenly the darkness was punctured by a flash and the report of a pistol. It must have been a signal, for there followed a series of flashes and a crash of rifle-shots, mingled with the shouting of men. They could distinguish Anson's voice and Ben Pratt's deep bellow, bawling orders, the heavy tramping of feet on the deck and then one long, terrible scream.

They flinched at the sound and sat listening and watching, breathless with excitement. Their shoulders were touching, and at the scream their hands clasped, almost unconsciously. They clung together like children afraid of the dark.

Then, soon after it began, the uproar subsided. They heard Anson's voice cry out:

"That will do there! Tie up those men forward. Where the —— is that man Winthrop?"

Harvey's head fell forward into his hands.

"My God!" he cried, "it's over, and so soon! They didn't even have a chance!" He was on the verge of tears. "Poor old Billy! And here I sit, utterly futile, while my friends are being butchered and can't turn my hand over to help!"

"But I can't see, if it has all happened so suddenly and unexpectedly," said Anita, "how one more man could have been of much help. You would only have been killed, too. Then where would Minnie and I be, Mr. Winthrop?"

"It isn't that, Miss Anita. Captain Englehart had some sort of plan to circumvent Anson to-night and wouldn't move till I was safe aboard, and I promised—good Lord, what am I saying?"

He lit another cigarette, openly this time, forgetting all caution in his excitement.

"What I mean is this: Captain Englehart, when I told him I was going ashore for you, said that you would be perfectly safe until morning and the main thing was to act quickly and beat Anson at his own game. I don't know what his plans were, but have every belief that he could have made good. I think now that he was right—he always is. Please don't think I'm sorry except on his account. Having your

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confidence would pay me for anything.

"I came in spite of his warning, for one reason because Billy honestly intimated doubts that a good woman could live on Anson's ship and stay good, and the truth is that since I've known them I love Billy and Carncross like a pair of brothers. They are the squarest pals I've ever had and I wanted them to know—as I knew, Miss Anita, from the first. I—I wanted them to know you and then all doubts would be at rest. The second reason was that I just had to come. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said the girl softly.

"And another thing, Miss Anita——"

"My friends call me Nita."

"Nita!" He said it over, very tenderly. "Nita——"

Minnie touched his arm.

"Look dere, suh! Do you see dat? Dey's comin' asho'!"

TWO boats, aglow with light, were tossing in the water, and a lantern was being lowered into a third from the deck of the *Albicore*. All three, they could plainly see, were filled with men.

"This will never do," said Harvey; "we mustn't be caught napping here. Help me to my feet, please."

He picked up his shoe and they helped him with an arm apiece. He stood tentatively on his injured ankle.

"Fine," said he; "only a little soreness, and I can hobble splendidly. Now you run forward as quickly as you can to your tents. Thank fortune we left the light burning, so you will have no trouble finding them. Above all things don't let Anson know that you were coming with me or even that we have talked together. There may be a ray of hope left, so be careful not to make open enemies of the winning side. I'm still trusting to Billy. Run along now, and hurry!"

"But we can't leave you this way! I won't do it. I've thrown in my lot with your side, gladly, and I can't——"

Harvey took her hand and raised it to his lips.

"Thank you for that, my dear, but you must go at once. It is the only way. I'm going to keep out of sight, so don't fear for me in the least. They must not find us together. It would spoil everything."

"But—but, I can't——"

Harvey looked behind.

"Nita, dear, for God's sake, go!"

The girl stood a moment irresolute, then she walked quickly to him and kissed him on the lips.

"Good-night—Harvey—and—and God bless you, boy!"

And she and Minnie vanished into obscurity.

CHAPTER XX

A CONFERENCE IN THE DARK

A SAND-BANK rose abruptly to a height of twelve or fifteen feet where Winthrop was standing. He could not climb it with his injured ankle, which still pained him more than he had let Anita believe, but he hobbled along till he came to a depression of the bank and by ascending the easy rise arrived at the summit and threw himself face down. There was a little patch of low scrub here and no birds. He was well hidden from any one passing on the beach below.

The boats had reached the shore and a troop of swaying lanterns came along the beach. In their glare Harvey caught momentary glimpses of shadowy legs and swinging arms, and soon heard low voices and the steady crunch, crunch of sea-boots in the sand. Presently the knot of men swept by, walking slowly, and Harvey, though flattened to as near effacement as possible, peered down eagerly through the shrubs.

In the light of the ship's lanterns the details of the group were fairly clear. In the center, guarded by the *Kestrel's* crew, each of whom carried a repeating rifle with knife and revolver at his belt, walked the men of the *Albicore*. Harvey counted them rapidly, then again, more slowly, and his heart leaped at the result. In the wavering light he could not be sure, but there appeared to be a total of fifteen men. There had been eighteen on the *Albicore*, all told, and eliminating himself and the Kanaka who had been shot that morning it meant that only one was missing.

There was joy in the thought for the watcher, but as his eyes traveled over them he saw that they were a sorry company, for, excepting Englehart, who appeared unwounded, there was not one who had escaped injury. Carncross, his face bloody, had one end of a rag in his teeth with which he was binding up an arm. Nolan, a crimson bandage round his forehead, was supporting one of the Kanakas whose blue-

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checked shirt and overalls were drenched with blood. Some of the others were limping and all bore some mark.

But many of the *Kestrel's* men were as badly off. One of them, a great, pock-marked ruffian, was spitting mouthfuls of blood with a bestial noise like the coughing of an animal, and at least half a dozen were red from wounds.

A short distance farther on the company halted and Doctor Marvin, who was walking with Anson and Pratt, swung the lantern he carried in a circle and peered into the gloom.

"It was about here that I saw that flash, Paul," said he, "but the beggar has certainly taken to his heels. As we sent the boats back we'll have him in the morning without fail."

Harvey thought, uncomfortably, of the cigarette he had lighted so recklessly.

"Yes," growled Anson, "and he may stand around and snipe a few of us in the meantime."

"Oh, no, he won't," said Marvin. "This man Winthrop's no fool, as I've told you before. More likely he's down with the women. At any rate I know a trick that will prevent any foolery of that kind. We'll herd this *Albicore* gang in the light and our men will stand guard around in the darkness where they can't be seen."

HARVEY heard all of this conversation and saw the Doctor's idea carried out. Englehart and his men sat together, a circle of lanterns about them, while the *Kestrel's* crew vanished into the shadow.

"Shoot any one of those men who moves out of the circle," called Anson to his men, "and you, Pratt, go down to the tents and see if Winthrop's hiding behind the women's petticoats. If he is, bring him back here—by the neck, if you have to."

There was a savageness in Anson's voice that made Harvey wince at the thought of what might be in store for him at daylight when he would inevitably be captured, and yet he was consumed with the desire to walk openly to his friends and share their fate in company. He could not believe that Englehart would forgive him for his part in the night's work; but he, Harvey, could, he told himself, be "in at the finish" with his friends, at least.

He was thinking seriously of delivering himself up at once when Anson and Marvin, who had walked away from the light, talking together earnestly, stopped directly below him and continued their conversation.

"Paul," said Marvin, in a low voice that had a strong note of impatience, "don't be an impetuous ass. Do you think I want the lives of these men for their own sweet sakes? I tell you that I've no more use for Billy Englehart than you have. Do as I say and you can wipe out the whole crew, from Winthrop down, for all I care. I'll help you do it."

"I repeat what I said before, Sawbones. When we overhaul Winthrop at daylight I'm going to hang him and Englehart and Carncross to their own cross-trees. That's exactly what is going to happen and you might as well quit your palaver about it."

"Listen to reason, Paul——"

"Blast your reason! This man Winthrop has been cutting in on Anita and she is interested enough in him to talk in his defense. Moreover, she saw me try to snipe him this morning. I wish to God you hadn't interfered! We had the devil's own scene on the beach and I lost all the prestige I'd built up on the voyage. 'English gentleman!' said my lady, 'and you call yourself an English gentleman!'

"I wanted her right, Marvin, in the right way—more than any other woman in my life. With a woman like that I'd have quit this bounder business, gone back and played square. Well, I couldn't get her, and now I'll have her the other way. But first I'll hang this man Winthrop. As for Billy Englehart and his mate, they've been thorns in my side for years. They're on my nerves. If you want to know, I'm not sure of myself or this treasure business till I see him swing. I tell you he's on my nerves, —— him!"

"Who said anything about letting him go, at least with a whole skin? Here's the point: we've combed this cursed lagoon from end to end and Corrigan's schooner's buried out of sight where, unless we find her by accident, we might lie here and rot looking for her; and mark me, Englehart knows where she lies. We must get what he knows by hook or crook and give these men their lives to pay for it. Do you think this thing isn't breath of life to me? Don't be a fool and I'll pull us through. Otherwise, mind your eye, Paul Anson!" His

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voice rose in a sneer. "You've as much as admitted that you're afraid of Billy Englehart. Well, stand by on this, or you'll have cause to be afraid of Sawbones Marvin!"

"But the project's rotten. If you knew Englehart as I do, you'd know he'd see us all to Tophet before he'd give in. Backing down isn't in Billy's make-up, I'll say that for him."

"You leave that to me. I've a plan and I'll stake my share of the loot it'll turn the trick. And as for actually letting these men go scot-free, I've another plan that will please you. Listen!"

He struck a match and Harvey caught a whiff of the smoke of a Manila cigar. The two men started to walk on, he heard a few further words, and then the Doctor's voice trailed off into unintelligibility in the distance.

HE LAY for a while thinking over what he had heard when Anson and Marvin came back and passed, walking toward the light. "You'll see whether it works or not," said Marvin, "as soon as we lay hands on Winthrop."

At this moment Pratt came into view.

"Well?" said Anson.

"Winthrop's not there, sir. Good care I took to make sure."

Harvey rose and, in spite of his aching foot, half slid, half scrambled down the steep bank and hobbled into the circle of light.

"Mr. Pratt," said he calmly, "were you looking for me?"

CHAPTER XXI

DOCTOR MARVIN

IF HARVEY had expected an effect, which was far from his thoughts, he would have been thoroughly satisfied. It was as though each man there had received a heavy charge of electricity. Anson stood petrified for a moment, his jaw dropped, then sprang toward him, but Doctor Marvin intervened.

"That will do, Paul," said he; "wait a while." He turned to Harvey. "Young man, you are surrounded by the entire crew of the *Kestrel*, all heavily armed and ready to blow you and your men to eternity. I believe you are wise enough to use proper judgment. Please hand over any weapons you have about you."

Harvey took the revolver from his pocket and tendered it to Marvin, butt first.

"That is all," said he, "except a pocket-knife."

Marvin took the pistol and placed it in his pocket.

"I wish to advise you," he said, "that our men have orders to shoot any one who steps out beyond those lights. Also," his face distorted itself into the crooked, malevolent grin, "I may inform you that we are most pleased to see you—most pleased! Pray make yourself at home."

Ben Pratt shot forward his bearded face, reeking with gin, and showed a cavern-full of long, yellow tusks. He thrust out a huge, hairy, tattooed paw.

"Say," said he, "we're on the outs, we are. But I like your nerve. Shake!"

"Thanks!" said Harvey shortly; "we'll save that till the row is over."

As Anson and Marvin walked away, he turned to his companions. Nolan grinned at him and Keawe showed his white teeth for a second, but Carncross was scowling as he nodded surlily and spat in the sand. Englehart was staring straight ahead and neither gave him greeting nor glance, and this ignoring of his presence hurt Harvey more than he had ever been hurt before in his life. He noticed for the first time that of all the prisoners Englehart was the only one who was bound.

Instinct warned him to let Englehart alone, and he sat down by Carncross.

"Well, Jim," said he, "things have happened."

"They have," said Carncross, busily chewing tobacco.

"I saw one of their boats on its way and could have been aboard in time and given warning, but in running I fell, sprained my ankle and got a nasty cut on the head. It knocked me out."

He put his hand to his head as he spoke and felt the sticky bandage, which he had forgotten. Carncross looked at him, nodded and spat out a gill of tobacco-juice.

"So I see," said he; "had a nurse to fix it up for you, too."

Harvey lit a cigarette and took a deep inhalation which he exhaled slowly.

"See here, Jim, we're all in a tight fix and I want to tell you something. I'm really—madly in love with Anita Corrigan. What I did, idiotic though it may have been, I did for her, and if you've ever cared

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for a sweet, good woman you'll understand. Now tell me, am I at the bottom of this? Is it all my fault?"

Carncross nodded again.

"I guess you'd call it that," he said, his manner visibly softened. "If we'd acted according to schedule we would have had this gang on the hip by now, but Billy wouldn't move without you. Even if we'd won they'd have got you on shore and mussed you up. Billy didn't want you to get hurt, so we're the fellers that got hurt instead, Mr. Winthrop."

"Tell me about it."

"It was short and sweet. Some one fired a pistol and they swarmed aboard. They outnumbered us two to one, were all heeled, and anyway a white man can always put it all over a Kanaka in a scrap. Hansen, Nolan and I did all the fightin' that was done. I knocked one fellow out and was goin' for Anson when that little beast Marvin caught me behind and broke my arm with a turn of his wrist. That let me out.

"Billy was in the cabin when they boarded, cussin' you out and crammin' cartridges in his pockets. He stumbled on the stairway and they shut him in, and a lucky thing it was, for Billy'd have died fightin' and so would the rest of us, I guess. Nolan was cut down. Hansen tackled Pratt with a carving-knife and Ben grabbed him, turned his wrist around and cut him wide open with his own knife. Hansen was the only one killed. Lord, how he did yell! After that they sliced up the men, but the Kanakas huddled for'ard like sheep and it was all over but the shoutin'."

FROM the windward beach came the deep, pulsating roar of an angry surf. The wind had risen and the salt spume stung their faces. The birds were chattering uneasily in the dark. Anson, with Marvin in the rear, stepped into the light. He was blandly smiling and his monocle was in his eye.

"Mr. Pratt," said he, "draw the men in a close circle. There's no further need for them out in the dark now that our young friend here has dropped in for a visit."

He leaned on his rifle, facing Englehart. There was a cruel, sinister sneer of triumph on his face—the sneer of the pretended strong man, and Harvey's pulses suddenly began throbbing. The scene was evidently set for a *dénouement.*

"Billy," said Anson, "I guess I've squared accounts with you. We're just about quits. I don't think you'll brag any more over a certain occurrence in the New Hebrides. I had it in mind to hang you in the morning, but my good friend Doctor Marvin here made a few pat suggestions. It's breezing up and there's going to be no end of a blow, so we might as well get this business over with."

Englehart was looking at him without the quiver of an eyelash. Bound as he was there was a menace in his eye and his undaunted spirit.

"Spit it out!" said he shortly.

"Billy, I believe you have the bearings on that wreck. I'm free to say I haven't—yet, and I want them."

"Get them!" snapped Englehart.

"I intend to, very shortly. You've seen that it doesn't pay to fight me. I have your life in my hands, and as much conscience about hanging you as I would a bally hound. Give me those bearings and I'll give you your life and the lives of your men and you can sail away in your old tub as free as air. I'll do more. I'll give you a reasonable share of the treasure. Do you take me?"

Englehart was on his feet, facing him, his arms still bound. His cold eyes blazed.

"Why, you —— copra-thief! You Kanaka squaw-man! You discredited, cashiered blackguard! Do you think because you stand smirking there with your threats that you can scare me? Save that talk for the Kanakas and poor old traders you've robbed. Why, you're a brave man, Paul Anson, with a raft of armed cutthroats to back you up against unarmed men. There isn't half a man in your hulking carcass! Turn me loose, Paul Anson! Turn me loose and I'll fight you, man to man, for those bearings! I'll do more, because you're afraid. Take a knife and a gun and I'll tackle you with my bare hands!"

NEVER was there a more manly and truculent figure. For the third time Harvey saw Anson's suavity fall from him like a discarded cloak. His monocle dropped, his face became suffused and his teeth bared in a snarl as he raised his rifle. Anson's sailors were leaning forward eagerly in the light and it is doubtful whether even in that crew of wild and lawless spirits there was one not ready to

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cheer the bearing of the under-dog. At that moment Anson would have had difficulty in getting a command obeyed.

Doctor Marvin stepped forward and laid his hand on Anson's arm.

"Hold on, Paul," said he gently, "you are losing your temper and we haven't arrived anywhere yet. Captain Englehart," he turned to Billy and bowed, his voice soft, low and ingratiating, "let me tender you my respects, sir. You are a brave man. It is plain we can not do business with you in this matter. We must apply to Mr. Winthrop, here. Mr. Winthrop, will you please stand up."

Harvey rose to his feet. The Doctor's voice was smooth, even and friendly, but something in it caused a cold chill to play along Harvey's spine and the hair to lift at the base of his skull.

"Mr. Winthrop," continued Marvin, "please give us the bearings of that wreck. In the present state of affairs they are more important to us than to you."

"I'd see you hanged first," said Harvey, "but the truth is I don't know 'em."

"Oh, yes, you do," purred Marvin. He came a step nearer, slowly, stealthily, like a jungle beast about to spring. His scarred face suddenly twisted with a hideous grin: "And you're going to give them to us!"

His slim arm shot forward as suddenly as a snake and his hand grasped Harvey's wrist.

"Look out, Winthrop!" yelled Carncross, in a voice of horror.

The rugged sailor's eyes were starting from his head.

Of a sudden Harvey's body seemed to rend apart. A monstrous, grinding pain shot through him as though the fiends of hell were tearing at his bones and tissues. He had not believed there was such exquisite anguish on earth, and above all was the frightful sense of dislocation—that his body was crippled and broken! Marvin quickly seized his other hand and locked his fingers into Harvey's. Then, grasping below the elbow with his other hand, he gave a quick, forcible wrench and stepped back with the look of a triumphant demon.

Both of Harvey's arms were completely disjointed from phalanges to shoulder and stood out, rigid and twisted, behind him! He screamed aloud, fell to his knees and then to his face and lay writhing and moaning in the sand.

5

A WOMAN had shrieked as Anita and her maid ran forward. Anson seized her round the waist while Pratt caught Minnie by the throat and forced her back. Every other spectator to this fearful drama seemed turned to stone.

"You cowards! You brutes!" sobbed Anita as she struggled to free herself, beating Anson's face and body with her fists. But he held her mercilessly and paid no attention to the blows.

It had happened in the twinkling of an eye, for even as the deed was wrought Englehart shouted:

"I squeal! For God's sake, stop, you cursed brute!"

"Ah!" said Marvin, "I thought you would."

He knelt quickly in the sand and deftly wrenched at one arm after the other till the bones snapped back to their normal place. In a few minutes Harvey was whole and sound again, but when Marvin turned him on his back he lay quite still, with blood on his lips and wide-open eyes staring at the sky.

(TO BE CONCLUDED)

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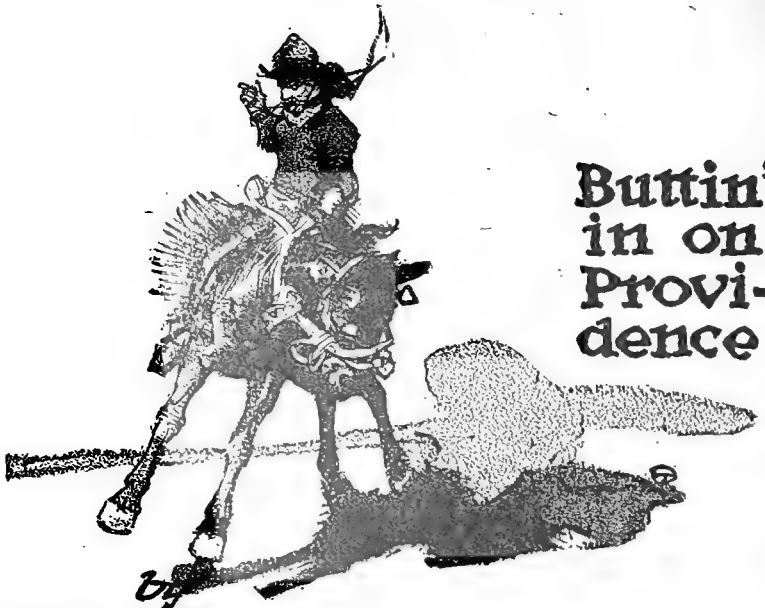

Buttin' in on Providence

By Emmet Mixx

WHEN the first revolver shot ripped the noonday stillness of Beacon's main street, Scotty made a surprised leap for shelter. He gained the porch foundation unpunctured, and gazed in mild reproof at the cluster of bullet-holes appearing in the siding above his head.

"Hey, Benson!" he called. "Oh, Benson!"

"Well?" The hotelkeeper's voice floated out through an open window, but the owner of the voice discreetly remained invisible. "What'll you have, Scotty?"

"Squint out there, will you, and see who that feller is; he's denting up your shack!"

"I know who it is without looking," replied the prudent Benson. "It's Posa Pete Dixon. He's bushed behind Forney's shed, and——"

"Posa Pete?" A thoughtful kink appeared at the corners of the besieged one's eyes. "How'd that *hombre* drift up here? I thought Arizona State had him for killing his boss?"

"Must have broke loose," was Benson's surmise. "Anyway, he's been here since last Fall, riding for Nailer. You and him must have met up down South, for when he heard you was coming home he said he'd make you hard to catch."

"He said that, eh?" Scotty wrinkled his nose discontentedly. This was not at all the sort of homecoming he had planned. During his six scorching years in the copper country the wanderer had pictured a return triumphant—full of wealth and officious, impracticable projects for the uplift of his native town. "Hard to catch—the pup! Gunning for me my first day home!"

"Well, don't take any chances, Scotty. Since he's been in Beacon the shifty-eyed cuss has stirred things up scand'lous! Him and his hard-riding bunch of hellions have got old easy-going Nailer worn to a shadow out to the ranch, and he musses up somebody every time he hits town. He's a mob!"

"Well, he ought to be stopped!" The long man eyed the bullet-holes with growing disfavor. "This here hotel is drafty enough without him shooting any more boards off!"

Benson shivered joyfully. Although engaged in a strictly domestic occupation at present, the boniface had not outgrown that pleasant lust for blood and sudden death that is the main factor of civilization. Besides, he had no fear for Scotty—Scotty was almost injury-proof.

"Would you like your gun-belt, Ed?

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I can drop it out the window to you."

"N—o." Scotty rolled over on his face and began wriggling along in the shelter of the foundation to the rear of the hotel. "I won't rise up right here; he's got my range perfectly elegant. I better go 'round."

Swiftly the lanky miner wormed himself along to the corner of the building, where he rose, and, cutting around Keener's store and Forney's shed, he came upon the absorbed marksman from behind and unawares.

THE next instant Mr. Dixon was grasped in the sinewy arms of Mr. Scott, carried to the hotel, and deposited with scientific accuracy in the center of the watering-trough. The trough was large enough, even for Dixon, who was not a small man, and there was plenty of water in it for Dixon's thorough immersion, without waste. Not any was wasted—the water that Dixon's clothing did not soak up was swallowed by Dixon.

"This here grieves me as much as it does you, Pete," Scotty said apologetically during a breathing intermission. "But I'm willing to endure it for your sake. Would you prefer to go in face down this time, or face up? State your ch'ice."

Without stating his choice, Dixon produced his gun. It was promptly taken from him by Scotty's large and capable right hand and tossed on the ground. Then Dixon was jerked from the trough and seated ungently beside the gun.

"Ef you ever do manage to perforate me with that thing, Petey," chided the miner, "I'm apt to git real het up!"

Nearly drowned, half blinded by the water and slime, Dixon still was game. He sprang at his manhandler, snarling and full of fight. Scotty caught his rush midway, and with a curious, twisting motion of his own body, sinuous and forceful, he bent Dixon backward and downward, shook him once or twice, and then pushed him, reeling, fifteen feet away.

"That will be about all, Posa," the miner said. "You better go get dry; you look like a muskrat!"

Dixon staggered back to his conqueror.

"I'll get you yet, Ed Scott!" he mouthed. "Get you, man to man, gun to gun! I've got two years of Arizona jail to thank you for!"

"Tut, tut, *hombre!* You've got me to thank for gettin' you safely in the jail. That gang was right earnest about h'isting you! You killed the squarest man in San Posa, and you ought to have swung, by rights. Now scoot and keep away from me!"

FOR a full ten seconds, the beaten man glared venomously at his contemptuous victor, his handsome, reckless features a study in hate and murder. Then, picking up his gun, he mounted his pony and rode away.

Scotty turned to enter the hotel, but encountered Nailer. The mild-faced ranchman had been a silent but not unappreciative witness of the scene.

"I done heard something about you striking copper down South," said the old man. "Is it true, Eddie? Did you strike it big? Air you thinking to settle in Beacon now?"

The miner smiled happily.

"I sold out for a scand'lous lot of money, Mr. Nailer," he answered. "And I guess I'll stop in Beacon awhile."

Nailer fetched a smile that was almost pathetic in its eagerness.

"I'd like to trade you for this ranch of mine—you often said you'd love to own it. Don't you 'member that, Eddie?"

The miner laughed.

"That was when I was riding for you. Every feller thinks he'd like to buy his boss out." Scotty's eye fell on the pony Nailer was riding. He started in delight. "Gee! I like that hoss, though. I'd buy *him!* Is he alive, or only a picture?"

Nailer belonged to the old school that was ready to trade anything and anywhere —streams barred. He dismounted at once and handed over the bridle-reins.

"Name your own price, Scott," he said magnanimously. "Take him just as he stands—saddle, bridle and all. He's a leetle too light for me, for one thing. How much you give? Name the money."

The pony really was a beauty. It was a pinto—a riot of startling color—a crazy patchwork of red, brown and black splotches overlaid apparently on a white body. The effect was glistening, shimmering, loud. Scotty admired the animal from all points, and then took a roll of bills from his pocket.

"Peel off a couple," he said briefly, extending the roll to Nailer. "I got to have

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that pony; he looks like a color-chart for a paint company."

Nailer shuffled the roll, made a judicious selection, and the pony changed owners.

Scotty looked at Nailer in time to catch the tail end of a satisfied grin.

"Tell me," he begged interestedly, in consideration of the grin, "tell me how I'm stuck. Is he sick, or hurt? I ought 'a' took the saddle off."

Nailer smiled benevolently.

"The hoss is sound as a dollar, but he's a runaway—always runs home onless he's tied. That kind of a hoss is no good for the cow country."

"That's so," agreed Scotty. "Well, you won't run away from me, will you, little Paint Bucket?"

THE miner mounted the stocky little animal and chirped tentatively. The next instant he was sitting in the road, counting stars, while the color-chart began an earnest flight toward the Shawnee Hills.

"Well, see him flicker!" remarked the new owner admiringly. He didn't trouble to rise, but cradled his knees in absorbed contemplation. "Where all is he headed for?"

"For my dry ranch on Little Shawnee," answered Nailer. "There's a new fambly of ranchers there. They sold him to me through Dixon, when he went to collect the rent. Don't blame 'em!"

"Neither do I!" assented Scotty, rising. "But say, d' ye notice the way he shed me? Didn't pitch, exactly—he's too durn short to pitch—just wiggled, like he had a chill, and, *pssf*—there I was!"

"French Joe will get him for you in the morning," Benson said in a smothered tone. The hotel-keeper had joyously joined Nailer in watching the trial of Paint Bucket. "He works for them ranchers every day or so."

"Ranching on Shawnee!" Scotty coughed at thought of any one attempting to cultivate that arid little valley ranch. "All right, tell Joe about it."

"Scotty," said Benson solemnly, "old Dreamer Wylie is inside, waiting to see you. Now, see here, you ain't buying something else?"

The miner twinkled.

"I just have, though, old timer! I've bought Wylie's Hall. The mortgage is due, and he can't meet it."

"Oh, Blitzen!" moaned Benson. "And yesterday you went and bought Ames's meat-market and Hunter's drug-store and the Beacon Orchestra Band and Dave Symes's alfalfa patch opposite the station!"

"Only a controlling interest in them things," corrected Scotty. "They wasn't none of them making out so awful well. Needed more capital, like, so I——"

"And they've all called and got their money," Benson continued bitterly. "It used up three of them pink checks you gave me to keep for you. Wonder you don't buy the telegraft office and the train. How 'd you let them get away from you?"

"Didn't think of 'em," admitted the uplifter. "But say, Bense, we're going to make this little old town set up and holler! That alfalfa patch will be a park where the band will play evenings, and the young couples will promenade along in their white dresses, and——"

Benson waved his hands despairingly. Then he set a number of bottles on the bar. "Try 'em all," he said. "Drink deep; don't wake up! Don't you know that all our girls, soon as they grow big enough to be courted, go on over to Scrappleville to live, where there is schoolhouses and theaters? Couples! White dresses! Where the blazes did you read that?"

"And we're going to make Wylie's Hall into a school," went on Scotty. "Scrappleville's too fur away for the kids in Winter. Dreamer says he knows a jim-dandy teacher for the kids; he'll look after the older ones; he was a professor back East, you know, and——"

Mutely Benson waved him into the dining-room, where old Mr. Wylie—scientist, lecturer, optimist, failure—met him with a handful of papers and received therefor a pink check.

"You better telegraft again and hurry up those desks," counseled Scotty, as Dreamer turned to go. "I sure want that school opened up next Monday. I advertised the opening in the Scrappleville paper. And don't fall down on getting that new teacher!"

II

SCOTTY had barely finished his breakfast next morning when French Joe appeared with the runaway pinto. The miner jumped two feet in the air, however, when his eyes rested

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full on the animal, for the pony had been groomed and dressed up as if for parade. Ribbons had been woven into the beautiful mane and forelock; dainty "cuffs" had been fashioned of paper for the slender limbs, and the glorious coat had been rubbed and rubbed until it shone with an effulgence that rivaled the sheen of satin. The horse was so proud he would barely turn his mischievous eyes on his new master.

Scotty regarded this fol-de-rol with disfavor.

"Now, looky here, Paint Bucket!" he said sternly, "who the —— has been dollin' you up this-a way? You wasn't like that last night when you fluttered!"

But the pony merely nicked the chiding hand and rolled his bright eyes.

"Somebody's done it," argued the miner. "Somebody that loves you and hates you to be sold away—one of that rancher's kids, I'll bet. Hunh!"

During the next three days the pony got away four times.

"What gits me," said Scotty in one of the rare intermissions between his new business ventures, "is the hunch the little Paint Bucket has for that old dry ranch. Joe always fetches him back from there—and collects a dollar."

"Is he gone again?" asked Benson, sympathetically.

"He is! He's always just gone or just coming back. And he's always dolled up. Look at the time I waste keepin' him dressy. Ef you'll loan me a hoss after supper, I'll go after him this time myself; I want to read them kids a lecture about the way they're proudin' up that animal!"

AFTER supper Scotty started for the ranch on his mission of censure. He reached the forlorn little place just as the thin moon was struggling through a mass of clouds. By this feeble light he located the pony in the tiny corral, and standing beside the horse he dimly saw a slight figure.

"Just exactly as I thought!" chortled the miner, as he noiselessly climbed the corral fence and crept up to the pair. "One of the rancher's kids tyin' on more ribbons. I'll have some fun with him!"

The next moment the moon was dimmed, and Scotty took advantage of the fact to make a sudden rush and grapple with the little figure. Then the moon came out sharp and bright on the pretty face of an angry, frightened girl.

Scotty's heart stopped beating.

"Oh, ex-cuse me!" he gasped.

He hastily released his captive, backed away, and waved his hands from the wrists in a ridiculous, semaphoric motion of complete surrender. This gesture was peculiar to Scotty, and expressed a perfect disclaimer of responsibility.

The girl staggered against the pony, wordless and violently trembling. Suddenly she swayed and began to droop.

"Hey!" cried Scotty imploringly. "Don't faint—please!" He advanced a step, but paused before her quick gesture.

"I—I thought you was a boy, and—oh, don't be scared like that! I was jest aimin' to have some fun with the little chap!"

Still voiceless, the girl retreated to the shelter of the creeper-grown home fence.

"O—ooh! Fun! No wonder the pony runs away from you!"

Then she disappeared, and only the rustling vines indicated her passing.

The miner stood frozen until he heard the slamming of a house door near by. He led the pony from the corral, mounted his borrowed horse, and retreated in disorder.

HE reached town before his thoughts took speakable shape.

"Golly, ain't she pretty!" was his first one. "I got to get acquainted with that girl!" was the second. "Ginger, wasn't she mad! And her voice sounds like little silver violins!"

When he reached Keener's store another and daring thought came to him. He entered.

"Gimme some ribbon—some red hair-ribbon," he said.

The clerk gazed at him in amazement. Of course, a returned cowboy-miner, wealthy and irresponsible, may be permitted occasional eccentricities. But—red hair-ribbon!

"Why—er—certainly, Scotty. What color hair did you say?"

"How the —— could I tell in that moonlight?" Scotty asked savagely. The clerk ducked. "What I want," continued the would-be purchaser coldly, "is—red—hair-ribbon! Do you get that? Red—hair-ribbon! See?"

"I see. Hair-ribbon that is ribbon. How much, Scotty?"

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"Oh, twenty-five or fifty yards. Gimme all you got—that narrer kind. Good night."

Scotty took his purchase to his room where, on the hotel stationery, he contrived a note:

DEAR MISS:
I'm right sorry I scared you so last night, but I thought you was a boy, honest I did, but gee I'm glad you ain't.

Yours resp'y,
ED SCOTT

P.S. I guess you must be about all out of hair-ribbon. Hope this will suit.

Yours very resp'y,
ED SCOTT

In the morning Scotty slyly fastened this note and the plethoric package of ribbon to the pony's head-stall in canny anticipation of the next runaway. Oddly enough, however, the pony was shy about getting under way. Several times the animal was left free or insecurely tied, but was so slow in escaping that alert friends of the miner balked its flight. Finally, Scotty rode the animal well out on the trail and turned him loose.

"There, gol-durn ye—scoot!" he said.

The pony scooted.

III

IT WAS well along toward noon of the next day when French Joe brought the pony back to the impatient miner. Scotty took one look at the horse and gasped. This time the beautifier had outdone herself, for the pony was covered with a multitude of bows. Bows, bows everywhere! Big bows on the flowing mane; medium bows on the forelock; tiny bows on the tips of the finely cut ears, and microscopic bows in series, dangling from the bridle.

A quick glance apprised Scotty that his note had been removed, but there was no answering note. The bows, however, constituted an answer—they formed a dainty, tactful method of returning his gift, without the sting of refusal. Scotty sighed wholeheartedly.

"Gee, ain't she smart! *M—m*, I'm glad I came back here to live! I'll have to ask Joe about them people."

Scotty hunted up French Joe. He found the choreman in Keener's, buying some tea and a tin of milk. The miner went directly at his subject, and wormed from the reluctant breed the information that the ranchers on Little Shawnee were mother and daughter alone, and were making poor headway with the arid place.

"Mak leetle garden," Joe said. "Ver' poor beesniss. Dey got no hoss for to plow, now any mo'. Dey haf not raise no stoff yet to sell so far."

"But why are they alone?" persisted the shocked miner. "Where are their men-folks?"

There were no men-folks. Joe explained in his soft jargon that the women had come to these hills in the beginning of Summer on account of the mother's health; that their slender knowledge of farming had taken no account of the irrigation problem. Further pressing elicited the facts that the women had been in dire straits at times. That they had been reduced to eating their own few chickens, and then——

"But the pony, Joe, the pony?"

"Wall, w'en cheeckens all gone, an' Deexon come for rent, gal say 'No money, m'sieu, jus' now, but in de Fall, w'en sell garden stoff, we pay.' Deexon say 'Nev' min' money. Ai lak call an' see you some tam.' So gal she say to me, 'Joe, t'ink dat we bettair sell pony—pay rent—git plaintee grub for *maman*.' Dat's all."

"My God," gritted Scotty, "and me wasting my time here, helping Wylie start schools and things!"

He rushed from the store, and by the time Joe had completed his simple purchases he had returned, leading an unwilling, indignant cow, by whose side bawled an equally unwilling, indignant calf.

"Here, Joe," said Scotty, wiping the sweat from his eyes, "I'm at my old trick again—buttin' in on Providence—but I can't stand for them women over there without no hoss or critters. Take 'em right over to the ranch—and the pony, too. Just tell 'em a friend sent 'em, see?"

Joe did not see, but he thought he did.

"*Non, non!*" he said positively. "Dose womans fine womans—you don' know 'em, Scot-tee. Bettair let 'em be. Dey mak out bes' alone; dey no want mans foolin' 'roun'."

The miner overbore him, however, and finally Joe mounted the pinto and departed on his errand.

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THEN Scotty rushed back to the hotel.

"Benson!" he snapped. "Bring your notary seal, or whatever it is you do real estate business with, and help me find Nailer. I'm going to buy that ranch!"

Benson leaned despairingly against the back bar.

"What in the ——!"

Scotty looked truculent.

"I gotta have some place to live, ain't I, Bense? I can't stay here in this hotel all my life!"

"And I was going to paint the place, if you settled, Ed!" The hotelkeeper drummed sadly on the bar and gazed across at the painters working on the drug-store and the meat-shop. "Some nice, bright color, like that there!"

"Paint her up anyhow, old scout, and when I get the ranch, I'll make the hull outfit come and stay a week with you."

Benson paled.

"No, no!" he shouted. "Not that bunch! Let it go as it lays! There's Nailer now—going into Keener's."

Nailer was eager to deal.

"Dixon's been advising me to turn the ranch over to him for a spell, and go on a vacation. But this is a better scheme!"

"It is!" said Scotty, with conviction. "Come on, let's count up the stuff!"

When the miner returned to town later in the afternoon, he found Joe just trailing in from Shawnee.

Joe looked like a man leading a very tired cow and calf, and he wore an odd expression of mingled fright, relief and defiance.

"No use!" he said simply, handing the rope to the miner. "Dey wouldn't tak heem."

Joe's eyes, however, were eloquent of much that his lips repressed.

Scotty said a strong word.

"Take 'em right back!" he ordered. "Take 'em right straight back, and tell 'em I've bought the hull blamed ranch, and they can stay there as long as they want, rent free! I ain't going to have any foolishness about this thing—them women's simply got to be reasonable!"

"Bettair mak dat cow be shod fust," Joe suggested. "Tough road over Shawnee. Cow footsore!"

Scotty said two strong words, and supplemented them with a third.

"I'll take 'em myself! I bet I kin pound some sense into their heads!"

Joe relinquished the job with a gladness born of experience.

"Me—Ai don' mind!" he said. "Dat old lady, she proud an' mad lak ——! *Sacre!* W'at a look wit' her eyes! She say 'Joe, we not hobjec' of charite!' So you go, Scot-tee. *Bon voyage!*"

Scotty went, and to the end of all his days he will remember that trip. The calico pony leaned valiantly against the tow-rope all the way, but he was pounds too light for hustling, and the cow had the better of the argument from start to finish.

IV

AS HE neared the little ranch he was overtaken and passed by a contingent of the Nailer cowboys. The men gazed in astonishment at Scotty and his charges, but they saw a tenseness in the miner's flushed face that forbade comment. They hurried on their way.

Scotty sent an envious look after their scampering ponies.

"Fine thing, bein' just a puncher!" he muttered, tugging wearily at the cow. "See them fellers! Their only worry is about grub-pile, and then look at me, playin' Providence on a Paint Bucket!"

As he entered the lower gate he rehearsed his plan of campaign.

"Now, what am I going to say when I git there? Why, that's easy! I'm going to wave my hand airy-like and say: 'Howdy, ladies! Here's the critters back again, like the bad penny'—and so forth. And they'll say: 'Oh, thank you, sir; but we couldn't think to deprive you'—and so forth. But I'll git real high-handed then and say: 'Now ladies, you'll have to quit this here foolishness with a feller that only wishes you good.' Then I'll tell 'em I've bought the hull ranch, and they'll see their troubles is over. Now, here we are, and, by golly, they're on the porch! Gee, they look mad!"

Scotty halted at the porch and accomplished his airy-like hand-waving. He got no further. Something icy seized his heart, traveled to his throat and clogged his tongue. It needed a man of courage lightly to address those two white-faced, tight-lipped women confronting him.

Like statues they stood—one a gray-haired, dignified statue, expressing mortally

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offended pride; the other, a sweet-faced, dainty statue of patrician wrath—with just a hint, in the pose, of lurking interest. Neither of these statues thawed a whit beneath the kindly radiance of their visitor.

The visitor coughed, swallowed hard, waved his hand again, but failed of speech. The statues turned, and with stately tread moved into the house. They closed the door.

Most men would have taken this reception in the light of a hint for departure. Not so Scotty. He had undertaken to deliver that live stock. He dismounted, watched his pony describe a straight line for the corral, smiled, and then tapped gently on the door. There was no answer. He tapped again. The door opened a mere trifle. Scotty bent his lanky person with native grace. The door opened a little more.

"Excuse me, ladies," he said timidly. "Here's a couple of critters——"

"We've seen them before," interrupted a sweet voice. "Please take them away; they're ruining our garden."

"That's just what I came for," the miner replied promptly. "I wanted to buy some garden-truck." He gazed vaguely about the scantily stocked enclosure. "Some tomatuses and—good Lordy, look at that cow. Whoa there—back up! Scat! Hi!"

HIS voice rose to a horrified yell, his eyes bulged on a scene of ruin. The weary cow had sunk down on a fairly prosperous colony of cabbages, and her offspring was doing the same to a double row of tomatoes.

The women shrieked and rushed out on the porch, waving their aprons in despair. Scotty rushed at the animals, tripped over a bean-vine and sprawled. The cow rose awkwardly and trampled the few cabbages she had missed at first. The calf scrambled to its feet and tried to jump clear over the prone miner, failed to clear him entirely, and the two went into a clinch.

Somebody laughed. It wasn't the gray-haired statue. Scotty rose dignifiedly; the calf galloped madly to the porch and came to a snorting, defiant-eyed pause, half-wedged in the doorway behind the women. Scotty waved his hands, semaphorically; the girl smiled reminiscently; a blue jay cussed in a tree near-by, and nature lost her frown.

"Ladies," pleaded Scotty, "please listen to me—just a minute!"

The ladies assumed an attitude of constrained attention.

"I ain't no ruffian," began Scotty desperately. "I'm just a blundering idiot who thought you-alls was Western women just getting started and glad of the neighboring attention that's the custom out here. I see my mistake now. You're city-women, and you don't understand that in the country hyer all we have is fur our women." This is not exactly the speech Scotty had rehearsed, but it is the one he delivered. "Why, ladies, out here, being friendly is the oftenest thing we do." As he spoke, Scotty's eyes were studying the flower-like beauty of the girl. He interrupted himself. "I've placed you-alls, now! You're from the South. I seen faces like yourn in Loosiana an' Virginny!" The women flushed and dimpled confirmatively. He brightened. "Why, I'll bet six bits that down home you-alls 'd never let a stranger ride away hungry."

The women looked uncomfortable. Scotty waved his hand toward the cattle.

"Them critters, they're hungry—played out and hungry!" He peered wistfully at some tomatoes that were ripening on the porch-rail. "And so 'm I! I'd give a dollar right now for one of them tomatuses and a cracker!"

THE Southern ladies capitulated. They gazed in quick remorse at the starving man and his starving animals. They spoke together in low tones. Then the girl came to the edge of the porch.

"We will be glad to have you stop for supper," she said shyly.

Scotty bounded on to the porch, beaming.

"And you may put the animals in the corral—till after supper. There is fodder there."

Scotty bounded off the porch and hustled the stock into the corral with the pony. When he returned he was ushered into the little cabin's main-room. To his hotel-worn eyes, the homely, domestic, woman-made place seemed a paradise.

"My name is Scott, ma'am," he said, as he took his place at the charming little table. "I b'long in Beacon, but I been away."

The ladies bowed.

"Our name is Terry," said the elder.

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"We are from Norfolk, but the doctor has sent me to the mountains." She smiled musingly. "I am learning to love them. So is my daughter Elma."

As a hostess, Mrs. Terry was gracious and tactful. She plied her guest with flaky biscuits and marvelous preserves; she maintained a running fire of small talk that he might eat more freely. Presently, in her woman eyes, appraisal died away and approval came in its stead. And all the while her daughter listened for the rare words of the wistful stranger, and heartily approved his valiant trenchering.

With the unusual comfort of a home-cooked meal, Scotty became exalted. He expanded; he rose by quick degrees to his happiest, most boyish mood, and volubly began a castle-building on that ranch that charmed the women into the gentle temper belonging to youth and hope.

They listened and glowed with his enthusiasms; and then they sighed. At the conclusion of the meal, Mrs. Terry received his thanks with a gracious smile, and gently piloted him toward the door.

"So sorry you have to go now, Mr. Scott," she murmured. "It has been charming to hear the plans for your newly acquired ranch. It is a pity that we shall not be able to share them as your tenants."

Scotty jumped.

"Why won't you, ma'am?" he asked with honest directness.

Mrs. Terry opened the door.

"Because we are going away," she replied. "Our little ranching venture has been signally unsuccessful, and we shall have to leave the ranch immediately."

Scotty gulped.

"And just as we was gettin' so nicely acquainted!" he said mournfully. "Are you going far away, ma'am?"

Mrs. Terry opened the door more widely. "My daughter is going to resume her profession," she said. "Good-by, Mr. Scott. So glad to have made your acquaintance."

And the next minute the breathless miner and ranch-owner was standing outside the door, gazing at the landscape and wondering how he got there.

"WELL, wouldn't that jar—hello, here's somebody comin'!"

Scotty walked down to meet the newcomer, who, pausing at the gate to light a cigarette, betrayed the unscrupulous features of Dixon. This was the first time the men had met since the ducking episode.

"Dixon!" cried the miner in surprise. "What calls you up this-a-way?"

"That you, Scott? Why, I—I call here once in a while."

Scotty grasped his arm and led the man out of sound of the house.

"Do you mean that you're callin' on this young lady, Posa?"

Scotty spoke very softly in his bewilderment.

"Sure I do," Dixon answered. "Why not?"

The miner stared at him. Then, still softly,

"But, Dixon, you-all mustn't come here—she ain't your kind of a girl!"

The rider shook off Scotty's grasp.

"Look here, Scott! I ain't poison! Every man's got a right to his own game. You quit buttin' in on mine. You made me trouble enough in New Mex."

Scotty paid no attention to the cowboy's belligerent tone. He seemed to be still grappling with the problem.

"Dixon, I've got to butt in." His voice took on a peculiar, rising inflection that should have been highly illuminating to the rider. "You ain't got no business here, I tell you! Why, man, when I got you into jail at San Posa, it wasn't because you'd killed the best friend I ever had down there; it was because your own little Mexican wife begged me to save you from the mob that was yellin' for you. And she wanted to go into the jail with you—the poor little kid! What have you done with her, Pete?"

Dixon laughed lightly, but the laugh was forced.

"Oh, she's all right, I guess. Besides, Scott, San Posa is a long ways off."

The miner again grasped Dixon's arm. His voice was not soft now—it was crisp and purposeful.

"Dixon, I don't know what excuse, outside of business, you can have for calling on these here women, but I'll tell you this: I spent a hour in their company to-night, and, man, they b'long to a different world from us, from you, 'specially. Now, you git on that hoss!"

Dixon hesitated an instant, then he mounted, but turned vindictively.

"You won't spend any more hours, Scott, for they're going away. We're going

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to resevoy this ranch, and old Nailer's told 'em to vamose. I had a place for 'em to go, but—" he shrugged his shoulders—"I suppose I'm crowded out!"

"You are just that," said the miner coldly. "I own this hull shootin'-match, now—since noon to-day—and them women could plant geraniums all over the place, if they'd stay. Now, you git along, and Dixon, if you're in Beacon after the first train pulls out to-morrow morning, so help me God, I'll kill you!"

V

SINCERITY pulsed through the miner's tone. Dixon realized it, and when morning came, Dixon went. There was no target-practise. The New Mexican had his billet, but his train was not headed south. Scotty watched the train out of sight. Then he mounted the Paint Bucket and started for Shawnee.

"For," he argued. "I gotta talk them folks out of going away. I'm going to hustle 'em right up to the main-ranch, and, laws, how happy they'll be! Why, there's about a million chickens there, right now—little fluffy yeller fellers. Tee-hee! Won't the little bow-maker have fun, tyin' ribbons on them chicks' pin-feathers! Oh, my!"

As he approached the Shawnee ranch, however, a feeling of desolation smote him. Something was wrong—the place was forsaken! Were they gone already? They surely were! The garden was bare, the house-door swung to and fro, and showed empty rooms. The soul of the place was gone. Dazedly the miner walked to the little porch.

"They're gone!" he said heavily. "Gone!"

He moved aimlessly through the rooms, and presently came upon a book that had been left behind in the flight. As he picked it up, the book opened and a folded bit of ribbon fell out—some of his ribbon. Pinned to the ribbon was his note.

Scotty closed the book quickly. He felt as though he had unwittingly peered into a private room. He flushed.

"Poor little gal!" he said aloud. "There wa'n't very much choice for her in this wilderness, was there? Her mama looked last night as though she was thinkin' that. I saw it, but I didn't understand it—then. Sneaky Dixon on one side, and rough, scrambly me on t'other! No wonder they run away. Like the pony; no wonder anything runs away from me!" His eye fell on the fresh wagon-tracks. "They only just about left; I could foller 'em and say good-by once more, but she wouldn't like that. Hark! They's some one comin' back. Perhaps——"

LIFE came into his tone, his face became glorified, as a slender figure parted the vines at the home fence and hurried toward the house.

The girl did not see Scotty, who had drawn behind the porch. She saw the pony, however, and started wonderingly toward it. Scotty coughed premonitorily, and then advanced to the startled girl.

"It's only me, Miss Elma. I came to try and talk you folks out of goin' away, but I was too late. I found this here book—I guess it's yours?"

The girl crimsoned as she reached for her treasure. This had been her reason for returning. Scotty retained a slight hold upon it.

"Are you goin' very far away?" he asked wistfully.

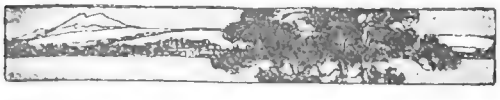
The girl dimpled. "Not so far that——"

Scotty jumped at the hope.

"That perhaps a letter might reach you?" he asked.

Elma shook her head.

"You mustn't write," she said positively. "Besides, it isn't far enough away for that. We're only moving into town—into Beacon—where I'm going to teach school for Professor Wylie."



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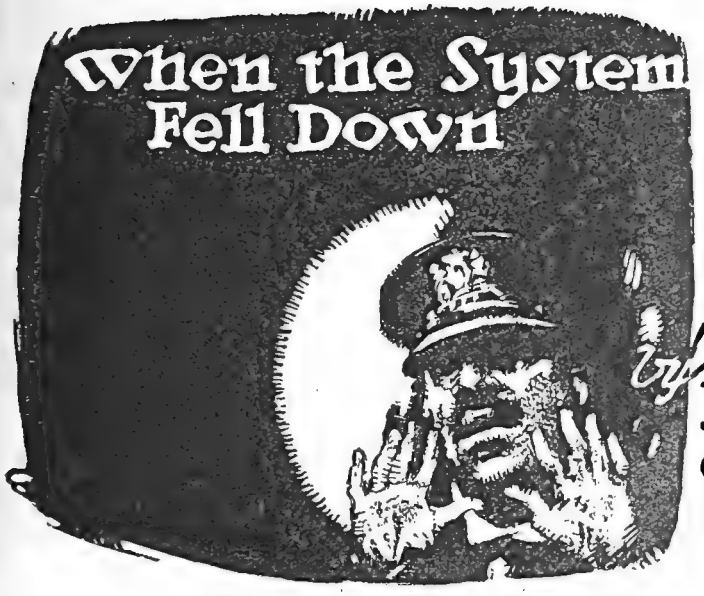
When the System Fell Down



by Henry Oyen

IT WAS in the air. Trouble—big, tragic trouble—was brewing in the Second Division; and plain-clothes-man MacCarn, as he began his patrol this Monday afternoon, sniffed its coming as a veteran mariner scents the approach of a terrific storm.

"Big Mike" Grogan and the Inspector had fallen out. It was a matter concerning the division of graft spoils. The Inspector, who, so far as Grogan was concerned, was merely the representative of the police end of the System, was alleged to have tightened the screws for the benefit of his own individual pocket. And Grogan—Big Mike, ex-alderman, saloon-keeper, ward-boss, and crime-king of the district, in his rage at such iniquity—had threatened to bare, for the District Attorney's benefit, the pretty little tale of the police-vice combination that ruled things in the Second Division.

"Which means," mused MacCarn, as he traveled along, "that Big Mike is electing himself to be killed off."

Before a tiny tobacco-shop in the heart of the "Bad Lands," MacCarn paused and stood looking in the window. The shop was conducted by his most faithful stool-pigeon, and Monday afternoon was the pigeon's day to report. MacCarn entered and threw a nickel on the counter.

"Hello, Max," he called loudly. "What's the good word with you to-day?"

The hunchback behind the counter turned and cut off a piece of plug.

"Something big stirring," he muttered, "but you can search me how it's going to break."

"Go on," said MacCarn. "What's new?"

"The talk is that they're framing it up to get Grogan."

"That ain't new," said MacCarn.

"No? Well, it's the first I heard of it. Besides that, Mouthy Jack is back in the district."

"What?" MacCarn's eyes suddenly narrowed.

"Yep. Got in last night. Laying hid in a room over Rubin's. And that kid, Eddie, you got the job for, over at the coal-office, wants to see you bad."

MacCarn took his purchase and carefully stowed it away in an inside pocket.

"Mouthy Jack back in the district?" he repeated. "How in the divil did he dare to take a chance?"

"That's what I say." The little tobacconist shot a shrewd glance across the counter. "How did he have the nerve? That's what gets me. He knows he's gone if anybody sees him, unless——"

He stopped sharply. MacCarn did not permit others to express suspicions that involved the integrity of the police.

"Sure," said MacCarn, "he's gone if anybody sees him. You forget the rest.

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And you say Eddie wants to see me?"

"You bet. He's worried stiff about something. I guess——"

"You guess what?"

"Well, I guess he knows they're about as anxious to have him out of the way as Grogan."

MacCarn turned to go.

"I guess you'd better quit guessing so much, kid," he said, warningly. "I guess you'll guess yourself into trouble first thing you know. And say, you better forget all you know about Mouthy Jack. See?"

OUT in the street, MacCarn began to walk slowly north, toward the railroad-tracks, where the coal-yards were located. He was troubled. Mouthy Jack—so-called because he spoke strictly in monosyllables—was back in the district. That fact alone was enough to disturb MacCarn. For Jack was one criminal to whom the Second Division was absolutely forbidden. He had been ordered away, never to be permitted to show his ugly face again.

Some said that this was because he had performed several little jobs for the Powers That Were. At all events he had been banished, and such banishment by the police is as powerful and as carefully heeded as the banishment of kings. Mouthy Jack had gone. And MacCarn knew that never would he have returned—unless he knew he would be safe.

It troubled MacCarn to meet with things in his trade that he could not understand, and this was one of them.

He was still puzzling over it, when he stood before the cashier's cage in the office of a coal-yard near the tracks.

"Hello, Eddie," he called to the cashier. "What's the good word with you, to-day?"

The cashier, a white-faced boy of little more than twenty, did not reply. Instead he slid off his stool, unlocked the door to the cage and led the way to a back room.

"They're after me, Mac," he said, shutting the door. His lips were set in the thin, straight line of desperation. "They're trying to hound me back into the game."

"Who is?" demanded MacCarn.

"The bunch," said the boy.

"Which bunch?"

"The one that hangs around Rubin's—the one I used to train with until you got me out of there."

"What are they trying to do?" asked MacCarn.

"Trying to get me to come back there. Trying to make me hang out with them. They say they suspect I'm playing stool-pigeon for you, and they say the only way I can prove that I ain't, is to come and hang out with them again."

MacCarn slowly rubbed his chin.

"Who said this?" he asked.

"Well, Rubin did the talking. He's the spieler for the gang."

MacCarn's gaze strayed carelessly to the ceiling.

"Rubin, eh? Did anybody else talk to you about this, Eddie?"

"No. But——"

"Only Rubin himself, eh?"

"Yes. He——"

"And just what did he say, Eddie? What did he want, in so many words?"

"Wants me to come and take my old room over his place for a while. Says the gang is getting ugly, but that he'll make 'em see that I'm right if I do that."

"A room over his place, eh?" said MacCarn slowly. "And if you didn't do it, then what?"

"He said they'd put me out of business. And they'd do it, too, you know that, Mac."

MacCarn nodded thoughtfully. His eyes continued to study the ceiling. He made no answer, and the boy, fidgeting nervously, at last burst out:

"Well, what shall I do?"

It was some seconds before MacCarn replied. Then his drawling words brought the cashier to his feet.

"Take the room, Eddie," said he.

"What?" The boy was trembling. "You don't mean that? Aw, God, Mac! Me go over there and live with the bunch of hyenas again after I've got out of there!"

"Take the room," repeated MacCarn.

"I'd as soon kill myself as slide back now that I've got straight."

"You aren't going to slide back."

"Huh!" The boy shrugged his shoulders. "What do you call living over at Rubin's?"

MacCarn's gaze came suddenly down from the ceiling.

"I call it good stuff," he said sharply. "You go over there and show the gang you're right. Do what Rubin tells you."

"Aw, Mac!"

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"Do what he tells you. It's the best thing you can do."

The boy drew himself together and his firm jaw shot out a little.

"Do you mean you're throwing me over, Mac?" he demanded, looking the detective squarely in the eyes. "Mean I got to look out for myself from now on?"

MacCarn's huge hand went out and fell on the boy's shoulder, and he smiled one of his rare smiles.

"Eddie," he said, "when I found what kind of stuff you're made of, I swore I'd look out for you as long as I live, and I'm keeping that promise. That's why I tell you to fall for Rubin's game. Go over there. Train with the bunch, and do just as Rubin tells you."

IT WAS a much troubled MacCarn who made his way back from the coal-yards. He had known long that Eddie was one of the choice thorns in the side of the System in the district. The boy knew too much of the close alliance between the crooked heads of police and the powers in the world of crime for them to be entirely at ease so long as Eddie was beyond their control. Since MacCarn had separated him from the criminal herd, and placed him where he belonged, in the world of decency and usefulness, Eddie had been the aim of countless evil wishes from police and crooks.

But so thoroughly was MacCarn feared by both elements that the knowledge that the boy was the old lion's protégé was enough to win him immunity from harm—until now. And now, what was it going to be? Of course there was something behind Rubin's apparently simple request that the boy show his old companions that he was not playing traitor to them. Something big, something ugly. MacCarn's uncanny police instinct told him this as plain as print. But what was it? What could it be?

It was a weird sort of jumble that this day had brought forth. Grogan and the Inspector had drawn swords; Mouthy Jack, the banished, was back in the district; and Eddie—they were getting after Eddie.

"Altogether," said MacCarn to himself, "it looks like we were going to have one little busy and interesting time in this district."

All that night, all the next day, and the next night, MacCarn combed the district with a fine comb in search for a single tiny clue that might clear up the jumble for him. He worked the little tobacconist unmercifully, but Max had told all he was able to learn. On Wednesday, Eddie again sent word for him and MacCarn went eagerly.

"Do you know what Rubin wanted me for?" broke out the boy. "He just wanted me to be his messenger to Big Mike Grogan. Said he couldn't trust any of the rest of the bunch. He reports to Mike every night about the takings in the district, and I carry the note."

"So?" said MacCarn slowly. His eyes were making a careful study of his boot-toes. "Made you his messenger, did he? Sends you with a note to Grogan every night?"

"Yes," said Eddie. "Grogan sits in his room above his saloon and waits for it. And that's what Rubin wanted of me."

The boy was obviously relieved. He had feared something ugly. This looked easy. Even Eddie had something to learn about the ways of the System.

"And I suppose people see you bring the note to Grogan, do they?" queried MacCarn, after awhile.

"Sure. Everybody knows that Rubin reports to Mike, and they see me running the errand. There's no secret about it."

"No," said MacCarn, "no, I guess not."

He was still groping, but the boy's revelation had helped. Far off in the brewing storm cloud, MacCarn had sensed a flash of light.

"And how do you go when you bring that note to Grogan, Eddie?" he asked suddenly.

"By the back way. Out the back door of Rubin's, up the alley to the back door of Grogan's, then up-stairs to Mike's private room."

"Come back the same way?"

"Yes."

"Have any signal for Mike?"

"Yes. I just say, 'Rubin,' and he lets me in."

"And what time are you there?"

"Between 12 and 12:15 every night. Why? What——"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. Just keep on doing what Rubin tells you." He rose, and there was a sudden flash in his eyes, as a new idea smote him. "Yes," he said

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sharply, "keep on; because I suspect that Rubin is soon going to be the boss of this district."

"Grogan——" began the boy.

"Quarreled with the Inspector," snapped MacCarn, and went out.

THE jumble was beginning to take shape. Here and there the edges of the cloud were lifting. MacCarn was beginning to understand.

"Max," he said when he entered the little tobacco-shop, "some day when I'm rich, I'm going to hire a bunch of huskies to kick me by the day."

"What's wrong?" asked Max in amazement.

"Kid," said MacCarn, with his head cocked on one side, "who do you suppose would be the next boss of this district, if Grogan was out of the way?"

The hunchback shuffled uneasily.

"I just heard about it a little while ago, Mac," he said, with his eyes on the floor. "I know I ought to have got a hunch before. The talk is that the Inspector's framed it up with Rubin to get Grogan, and Rubin is going to be boss when the job is turned."

"Sure!" said MacCarn. "And that's why I want to be kicked: because I didn't see it before. And now I guess we know why Mouthy Jack dared to come back to the district, eh, Max?"

"I guess we do," said the hunchback.

"Yes," said MacCarn, and even Max, who knew him well, shuddered at the iron in his tones, "they've framed up a very pretty mess of doings, but you watch me, Max; you watch my smoke!"

He went forth and hunted up Mr. Matthew Black, the *Star's* veteran police reporter in the Second Division.

Black's eyes lighted up when he saw the serious expression on MacCarn's face.

"Something doing, Mac?" he asked.

"Something doing is right," replied MacCarn. "Matty, did you ever stop to think of what a fine thing a system is? No? I'm ashamed of you. A system is a contrivance by which you send another man down in the pit a ways, and he sends another man, and so on until there's a chain, and then, way from the bottom, they pass you up a pot of gold, and never a speck of slime on your own fingers."

Black carefully selected and lighted a cigarette.

"Go on," he said, "get it off your chest."

"A grand thing—the system," continued MacCarn. "There's only one way to beat it—that's to have a system of your own."

Black puffed twice.

"Are you thinking of beating it, Mac?" he asked.

"I am," said MacCarn. "I'm going to beat it. Will you help?"

Black puffed three times. He watched the blue smoke go upward. He heard MacCarn breathing heavily.

"Sure," said Black.

And that night, after a long and secret conversation with his managing editor, Black disappeared from the eyes of men. A cub came to do his work at the division headquarters. Black, word was passed around, was off for a few days' vacation. And plain-clothesman MacCarn traveled in and out of the "Bad Lands," humming unmusically and through his nose.

"Don't worry," he said to Eddie, when the boy sought to learn how it was all going to end. "The explosion will be coming soon, and you're going to be safe under cover."

IT CAME at exactly twelve o'clock on Saturday night. At that moment there seemed to fall a lull upon the activities in and around the establishment of Big Mike Grogan, the dead calm before the sudden crash of the storm. Then, in the moment of silence, a shot cracked forth, up in Big Mike's private room. Then a roaring curse, another shot, and silence again. Down the stairs leading from the room into the alley came the sound of running feet; out the back door dashed a crouched figure, revolver in hand, which fled away in the darkness, down the alley toward the back room of Rubin's.

Then a series of strange happenings proceeded to take place. First of all, it was strange that four plain-clothesmen should be standing across the street from Grogan's apparently waiting for just such an occurrence. At the sound of the shot, they crossed the street, and one ran up the stairs to Grogan's private room.

"Yep," he said, when he came down, "he's dead."

The four officers followed down the alley after the fugitive. They did not hurry. Instead they waited until they saw the man swing safely out of sight through

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Rubin's back door. It was perhaps two minutes later that they reached the door. Two officers remained below; two went up-stairs to a room on the second floor. In the hall one picked up a smoking revolver.

It was Eddie's room. Eddie was preparing to go down-stairs and bear the nightly message to Grogan when the officers knocked. He opened the door. One of the officers stepped inside and knocked him senseless with a blow on the jaw. The other carefully placed the discharged revolver in the boy's hip-pocket. Then they handcuffed him and dragged him down-stairs.

Fully as strange as the presence of the officers near the scene of crime, was the arrival of a patrol-wagon at Rubin's at that particular psychological moment. Eddie was thrown in, and the wagon rolled away to the headquarters station.

BUT stranger even than these things were the actions of MacCarn, who stood hidden in a dark areaway and watched the back door of Rubin's.

To him, a few seconds after the wagon had rolled away with its prey, came a pale, tired and disordered young man, whom close scrutiny revealed to be police reporter Black.

"Well?" growled MacCarn.

"You were right," said Black. "It was Mouthy Jack. He went down the alley into Rubin's."

"Right," said MacCarn. He drew his revolver and started for the back door. "Stand here, Matty, and listen to some fun."

"Not I!" cried Black. "After having lain up in that old warehouse watching Grogan's back door for four nights, I want to be in on the fun."

MacCarn went straight to the door without another word. Rubin himself was standing there, big, fat and important.

"What do you want?" he demanded of MacCarn. Then, with his pudgy hand on the officer's breast, "You can't come in here!"

The left-handed swing that answered this challenge changed the topography of Rubin's face considerably. MacCarn put all his hate of vice and crime, his disgust with the System, and his rage at the touch of that foul hand, into that one blow. It hurled Rubin senseless into the hallway, and ever afterward his nose was minus its hook.

MacCarn went up-stairs to the third floor. As his footsteps sounded on the top stairs, a door opened and a face, evil beyond description, peered out.

"Ah, Mouthy Jack!" cried MacCarn, leaping for the door. "Ah, you cheap, hired killer! You got Grogan, all right, you bum murderer, but here's where I get you!"

Two shots roared in the little room. Black never could figure out how Jack's bullet missed the detective at such short range. When he entered the room, MacCarn was looking down at the dead crook.

THE Inspector of the Second Division had just settled back to congratulate himself on the evening's work. Grogan was out of the way. That eliminated the danger of any trouble with the district attorney. Eddie, also, was safely taken care of. He was safely stowed away down-stairs, with a murder charge against him. He had been taken with a smoking revolver in his pocket. He had been the only person accustomed to see Grogan at that hour of the night. He had quarreled with Grogan, Grogan had struck him, and the boy had fired. There were people who had seen it—that is, there would be at the trial.

Yes, it was all very well done. The Inspector reached for one of his big, black perfectos—and then MacCarn and Black strode boldly into his room.

MacCarn carefully closed the door behind him and turned the key. Black stood and regarded the Inspector with an expression of amusement.

"Well?" growled the Inspector. "What do you fellows want?"

"We want you to rectify a little error," said Black.

The Inspector looked up and met MacCarn's icy blue eyes.

"What d'you mean?" he growled.

"The lads who went after the guy who got Grogan, made a mistake," said MacCarn.

His tone was like the thrust of a cold knife.

The Inspector glared.

"What d'you mean?" he demanded again.

"They got the wrong man," said Mac-

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Carn; and he and Black stood and looked at the Inspector in silence.

"How do you know?"

"Because I got the right one, Inspector," said MacCarn. "I had to shoot him. He's dead."

The Inspector looked up, dropped his eyes, and began fumbling with his cigars.

"You know who the right one was, Inspector," said Black blandly. "It was Mouthy Jack. I was hiding up in a warehouse beside Grogan's and I saw him. MacCarn tipped it off to me last Wednesday."

"Tipped what off?" cried the Inspector.

"Oh, I know the whole thing," said MacCarn. "I got next to the frame-up that was going across on Eddie. Eddie's a friend of mine. I couldn't see him be handed a raw deal. So I got Black here to help me, and"—he took a step nearer the Inspector—"and Eddie's got to be turned loose to-night and left severely alone from now on."

"Yes," said Black, "I've got a story that would tear this district upside down—unless MacCarn has his way."

The Inspector recovered himself. He had lost. It was his time to crawl.

"It's too bad they made a mistake about your friend, MacCarn," he said, smiling. "I'll have him turned loose at once. I'll have orders out to leave him alone after this. And I'll see that you—that you get credit for getting the right man."

"Yes," said Black, "because my story will keep. It will be just as good a year from now as to-day, and I'll print it the day MacCarn gives me word."

But MacCarn had already turned and was going down-stairs to keep his promise to Eddie.

Ulanda of the Putumayo

By Donald Francis McGrew

TOMMY PATTEN, saturnine, dreamy-eyed, raconteur of note, settled back in his chair, and in so doing advertised the coming of a story. The club members drew near him. Here's the story:

IT WAS an atrocious place—a place atrocious beyond words—where I first met Ulanda of the Putumayo. Not so much from the medieval South American surroundings I found there, as from the medieval conditions. I came in from Ullila, following a hint from the consul; the Company's need of a clerk was coincident with my need of money. I finally reached the settlement back there in the selvas between the Napo and the Putumayo—a tin-roofed barrio squatting in a surrounding of manacca palms, sandalwoods, rubber and cinchona trees, with occasional views of the blue Andes in the distance.

The Company had built the place as a receiving depot for their rubber, caoutchouc, quinine and cocoa output, and depended on the Iquitos Indians for labor. This,

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you will say, was a business necessity, since by no means could white men be induced to come into that country as laborers; but the manner in which these Indians were treated was not a necessity, and would have made the Apaches turn over in their graves for sheer envy.

You see, each Indian was required to bring in so much of whatever he worked at—so many cahucs of rubber, so many strips of cinchona bark, and so forth. In return, according to the contract with the government, he was to receive so much money a day—a peso Mex. at the outside. But he was forced to trade at the Company store, a game that is as old as the hills, and what the Company charged was their own business.

Once he was in the Company's debt, and fell behind with his output, God help him. Larkins, the big chief of section, and his twenty-odd *racionales*, or straw-bosses, would drive the poor devils into the building they called the bull-pen, and commit them to tortures outrivaling even the horrors of the Inquisition.

As an illustration, how would you like to be strung up by wrists and ankles, face down, and be beaten across the stomach with bull-whips made of tapir-hide? Or stuck into stocks with your feet a yard apart for days? Or hung by the neck with chains in a hitch they called the gooseneck, so arranged that you would not choke immediately—then, after hanging there a while, they let you drop ten feet to the floor? Or penned into an enclosure with food just out of your reach and left to starve to death? Those are some of the things they did to the Indians, not once, but every day.

When I saw mothers beaten nearly to death for alleged shortages in their little boys' outputs, I was for taking a gun and cleaning out the whole settlement; possibly had I been a so-called muck-raker I would have done so. However, though I have never had the chameleon trait of doing in Rome as the Romans do, my knocking around has taught me at least outwardly to condone conditions as I find them — that is, where there is no hope of amelioration.

I was broke, and needed the money; but those things began to get under my belt. I was a "checker," and when I rode out and by chance came upon some *racionale* walking away from some poor devil he'd pistoled from behind, I would wonder how it would feel to have my fingers at his throat—so—and squeeze till his miserable life went out. Think of it! White men, with white skins, like you and me, with whom I was forced to come in contact daily, and all reverted to the lowest type of savagery—nay, even lower, for they were yeast, beastly yeast, with nothing stirring in it save the lowest primeval lust.

Why didn't the Indians rise up and slaughter the lot of them? Because, as a baseball-manager would put it, they had lost their "pep." On their faces were stamped the marks of subjugation inherited throughout the centuries. First the Spanish, then the concessionaries who got the land from a government that would have sold them all for a dollar apiece—they were whipped before they were born.

"LOOK at 'em," Larkins would say as these white jackals sat around at night, actually bragging of their atrocities, "look at the sniveling whelps! The —— blacks ought to be swinging back and forth in the trees like the monkeys they are."

"But they're not negroes," I said; "they're Indians."

"All the same, all the same," he growled, "we're the only race that amounts to anything. Oh"—with a peremptory wave of the hand—"you're not the only fellow, Patten, that has observed things and read a few books. Take the tongues out of those mozos and what would they be? Apes, that's all. We whites civilized the world, didn't we? We're better all the way round. We've got brains, and will-power, and higher emotions. Look at 'em! About the only thing they feel is pain, which is a good thing, or we'd never be able to reason with 'em at all. Have they got any tendencies to better themselves in any way? Any tendencies for love or gratitude?

"Do one of them a favor and what do you get? A knife in the back if they thought they could get away with it and make a peso. Kill his squaw and what does he do? He gets another the next day. Take the Company away and what would become of them? Starve. And yet they're fools enough and knaves enough to gang any white man when they get the chance, and they have even got the nerve to beg supplies

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off the Company when they never intend to work it out. But I'll make 'em work, by God!"

And he did. Curiously, Larkins would have no Barbados negroes around him as foremen, like some of the other section-men, because "they talked like their mouths were full of mush," and he wanted white men instead—*gentlemen*, he said, of his own kind. It would have been poor policy to have pointed out that their own tendencies toward the higher emotions were as lacking as the Indians', and that, judging from the advantages they had had, their state was infinitely more deplorable; for Larkins was a brute of a man who stood six feet and over in his shoes, and every inch a concentrated square mile of the devil. Too, he had a gang behind him who would have stopped at nothing he ordered them to do.

Besides, what he said of the mozos was too true—dirty, degraded, thieving, their apathetic submission to the treatment engendered a contempt that half drowned the pity one felt for them.

II

IT WAS then, when I was wondering if there were not one among them who was worthy of being called a man, that I came upon Ulanda. I was riding out in the woods, and had just heard the muffled report of a rifle through the vines, but had paid no attention to it, as reports were frequent, when, pushing through some intervening manacca palms, I came upon a tableau there in a little clearing that I can not forget.

There was a man there, all but naked, with his right hand raised and holding a dirk, and, in front of him, a puma ready to spring. The puma had been shot in the shoulder. The man's rifle lay near him on the ground.

I thrilled, for never had I seen their like—either the cat or the man's. As I took in the puma, settled back on its haunches, tail waving angrily, stiff hair bristling around the neck, red mouth opened wide, I gasped with fear for Ulanda; but I almost lost sight of this in the wave of admiration that Indian inspired. Gentlemen, he was a giant, and a brave one at that, for he stood there watching that cat with narrowed eyes, his legs set ready for a leap to the left, his bare muscles standing out in beautiful snake-like rolls all over his body, a tense figure of a man to whom the name of fear was unknown.

"——," I swore, "I didn't believe there was that much stamina in the whole Iquitos tribe!"

Here my soliloquies came to an end, however, for I had scarce time to raise my rifle before the puma leaped. I was steady enough to relieve a very tight little moment with a shot through the brain. The puma twitched in the air and fell, thumping and thrashing on the spongy ground.

Then I stepped out.

"*Mucho malo*," I said, nodding at the cat.

"I spik Inglis," he told me. "I hear, but I haf no tam to turn 'roun'."

I had my first opportunity for a good look at his features and I took advantage of it as he stood regarding me with a certain wonder in his eyes. Ulanda not only stood out from the rest of his tribe; he lent dignity to the grotesque trappings which his people sometimes wore. His dark eyes, bright and observing, lent an aspect of intelligence to the high-cheek-boned, Grecian face, while, contrary to the "poker" faces of his contemporaries, his lips had the peculiar trick of revealing his emotions, curving when pleased, puckering in surprise, or straightening into a grim line when angry. And his physique—he was cast in a mold likened to that of a combined Apollo and Hercules.

"You look surprised," I said at last. "What is it?"

His answer was not direct. Suddenly he thrust out a hand toward me.

"*Mucho gratios, señor*," he said gravely, in his broken Spanish.

Then I understood. He had been vastly moved by the fact that I, a white man, had intercepted to save his life when the others would have very probably let the fight go on for the pure love of seeing the battle. I took his hand, for it was the cleanest, figuratively, that I had come in contact with in the Putumayo.

"Don't mention it," I said. Though he did not "slop over," he squeezed my hand again.

"Me owe," he insisted; and I could not help thinking of Larkins's remark about gratitude.

AFTER that I saw Ulanda quite frequently, dropping down to the shack where he lived, alone, on evenings when the rest of the renegades were

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indulging in a game of cards. You will say a fellow must have been rather hard pressed to seek the company of an Indian in preference to white men; but he was clean, he was a thinker, and altogether preferable above them, as you shall see.

He was free from marks of any kind, and one evening I asked him about it. "How does it come," I said, "that you are unmarked among a tribe where people seldom live beyond thirty-five?"

"I work," he replied simply.

And that was the reason. He could bring in more gum than any two men in the settlement, and did it, without murmuring. Not that he was broken-spirited like the rest; he had been born in those conditions, and he must live. He would not only live, but he would live well, according to their standards. Therefore he worked, and as for the rest of his tribe he held them in contempt.

One evening when he had been questioning me about the chances up in the States, I ventured to sound his mind regarding reprisal for the wrongs under which they were suffering.

"I know," he said, with a flash of his eyes, "but they no good fight. Like woman. No one hurt me yet."

Though he did not say so, the implication was that if any one did, and did not kill him at once, there would be such an eruption as Rome had never seen. I did not question him further, but we understood each other very well. And, while I went on working and waiting for my first pay-day in order to get away, Ulanda continued unmolested in the forest, saving his returns against the time when he could break loose for that wonder-world I had told him of. As you shall see, he had a reason.

The reason appeared one evening as I stood leaning on the commissary-counter talking to Larkins.

"Well, philosopher," he twitted me, "I see you've been hobnobbing with Ulanda some. Find him a good character-study?"

You see, I'd been telling them that I was something of a writer, and found the local color interesting. I nodded, and he grinned.

"Well, as long as you don't write up anything that will draw any missionaries around here, it's all right. But a character-study—bah! Can't see anything to any of them."

"He's unusual, at least, in that he does his work without being flogged," I retorted.

"You're right there," he answered.

But he looked very hard at me. I think he had already begun to suspect my views of him. What he would have said, however, was lost in the advent of the reason I spoke of.

She was an Iquitos, and a compliment to the tribe. Not that she was as beautiful as Lillian Russell, but she was tall, she was straight, she was queenly in bearing. Her lips were too red, her color too high, her eyes and hair too strikingly black, to have pleased our conceptions of beauty. But instantly, as I looked at this lithe, deep-bosomed daughter of the forests, I thought, "What a mate she'd make for Ulanda!"

Having just come from the mission at Karnay, she was dressed in clinging white, which did not detract any from the curves of her figure. She made a few purchases from the ogling clerk, and went out without a word or look at us.

"Phew!" said one who fancied himself somewhat among the women, "that's the first time I've seen the old chief's daughter!" Winking at me, he said, "Me for her!"

"What?" growled Larkins. His face had grown very black. "You stay away from that, you hear me?"

Then he stalked on out the door.

"My!" gasped the other. "Him with a squaw, too! Say, ain't he got the muddy eye, though? But if he says stay away, that settles it with me. He pulls the quickest gun in this camp."

III

AS SOON as I could, I sauntered on down to Ulanda's shack. There seated in the room was the girl, with the big fellow seated before her, his head against her knee. Her hands were rustling through his hair. They had not heard my approach, so I coughed apologetically.

If an Indian can blush, Ulanda did at that moment.

"Señor," he said gravely, albeit his eyes sparkled, "this is my wife, Misamis."

You'll notice he did not say squaw? No, she was his wife. I recovered from my surprise in time to do the courteous, to be further surprised when Misamis addressed me in English as good as my own, barring

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the accent. Then, with eagerness, those two forest-children took me into their confidence and told me their plans.

They had been married two years, but had kept it a secret. Her father would have much rather sold her to some white man, you see. That was why he had educated her at the mission. He wanted to make her doubly desirable, for squaws that can talk in addition to possessing good looks are scarce. But they had fooled him—they showed me the priest's certificate. Too, Ulanda, in spite of the high prices at the commissary, had, by his hard labor, amassed a fortune of five hundred dollars gold through those years. They showed me that, too.

There was a pack-train to be ready for them the next night, a pack-train with but four mules, but sufficient to carry their belongings to the coast, where they would catch a steamer to "*este grande countree.*" Ulanda would have his hair cut, they informed me, and would wear a white duck suit recently procured, once they reached the coast. Oh, yes, everything would be all right; did he not have the two hands of him to use where work was plentiful—two hands to work for Misamis? They laughed like happy children.

THAT afternoon I had been forced to witness a particularly distressing scene in the bull-pen. There had been a woman chained there in front of her husband, whose punishment for gum-shortage she was forced to watch. The details would have sickened any self-respecting animal—they ended by holding burning matches under him—and now, as I looked at these two lovers who, in spite of their limited intelligence, remained above this slime as the swamp-flowers above the muck, the dull red craze that torture had engendered in me was abetted by a sorrow that somehow got way down under my belt. Happiness lay almost within reach of their eager fingers, but over them hung the shadow of Larkins, and I, who knew, had to tell them.

Finally I managed it. They stiffened, their smiles fading, while I told them of Larkins's evident intentions, and mapped out a course of procedure.

It was best, I suggested, that they make all haste and get away to-night. If Ulanda could get the mules ready, I would stay in the shack with Misamis and help her get the packs in shape. This they agreed to, though they would be short on provisions. Ulanda stepped out into the night, while the girl and I fell feverishly on the bundles.

I was bending, I remember, over one stubborn pack when I looked up and saw the girl's eyes enlarge with terror. I wheeled sharply. There in the door stood Larkins with an automatic in his hand.

"I heard you were down here, my beauty," he grunted. "Ha! There *you* are, Patten. You've been informing, have you?"

There was no denying it.

"Yes," I snarled, and at the same time whipped out my pistol.

But I was too late, for the room rocked and echoed with the two reports, the lamp flared and went out, and I was down under an overturned table.

So close had he been that the flare of his gun was like a fireworks-bomb exploding in my face. The in-slapping darkness blinded me. I thought for the instant I was done for, but I had only stumbled against the table in leaping to the side. Larkins I could not see, though I heard him curse in the black gloom. Neither could I see the girl; but, as I bumped my head coming up, I heard her scream and struggle against him; then the room filled with figures who suddenly swept to the door together, I following and not daring to shoot for fear of hitting Misamis.

The blackness of the night hung low like a thick pall, cutting off all possible chance of recognizing figures save at close range. I could see they were heading in the direction of Larkins's quarters, however. But for the instant I paused in indecision, wondering if it were not best to go get Ulanda before attempting a rescue. Just then she screamed, and Ulanda settled it for me.

A great figure burst out of the gloom and leaped upon them with the impetus of a full-back going into the line. Actions followed so quickly as to be indescribable. There was the gasp of men close locked, the thud of fist on flesh, cursing, groaning, and the heavy fall of bodies. I heard Larkins roar once above the din; then came a report, and another; following which I recognized one of the *racionales* cursing Larkins for a fool as he groped, coughing, on the ground.

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As for myself, I had run in, striking with my clubbed pistol at the sounds of voices I knew, but all at once I found myself locked with a fellow who fought without a word, though with the fury of a tiger. I twisted, placed one leg behind him, and threw heavily, so that he fell clear of the mass. But on the instant I could have cried out for shame. In throwing my heel behind my antagonist, I had sensed a woman's skirt.

"Misamis!" I whispered, dropping beside her. "Tell me, are you hurt? It's Tom, Señor Tom."

Before she answered, several things had happened; in kneeling I had touched the unloading stage of one of the warehouses; and, too, I heard Larkins exulting: "We've got the big ——. Quick, some one, get a light."

It set me thinking mighty fast, for, if Ulanda was down, then we could do no good at the present moment, and, with a light on the scene, we would surely be discovered. Underneath that porch seemed the only available retreat; therefore I decided on it at once, thinking to elude pursuit until some other plan suggested itself.

She recognized me, but I think was partially stunned by the nasty fall I'd given her. Otherwise she might have spoiled it all by rushing to his side. But she followed, and we crept back under the steps and so back behind the boards.

WITH the coming of the lanterns I found a convenient knot-hole, and lay there watching while they surveyed themselves and the dark huddle on the ground.

"Bashed his head open some," one grunted.

"Yes, and you got me, too," wailed the man whom Larkins had accidentally shot.

Larkins kicked at him.

"What if I did?" he roared. "That cub of a Patten got me along the shoulder, too. You muddled the whole thing, you beachcombers! You swine! The girl's gone, and so's he—scatter out, the lot of you, now, and find them!"

"Ain't we going to finish the mozo?" one snarled.

"You do as I tell you. Jenkins, get a mule and drag that —— by the ankles into the pen. I'll take care of him in the morning. Here, Murch, you go over to the commissary, quick, and wake up that drunken lout who calls himself a doctor. Bring him over to my quarters—my shoulder's bleeding badly. And say—you fellows scour this camp from top to bottom, you hear me? I'll be with you soon as I get this fixed."

Take care of him in the morning! I knew what that meant, or, that is, I could guess, if I wanted to give my imagination free rein.

Suddenly the girl roused.

"I heard," she said. "I am going to him."

I was forced to protest vigorously before I could make her wait.

"We've got to take a chance on them not finding us," I explained, "and then there may be some hope of getting him away after the thing quiets down. It is the only hope we have."

She subsided then, and for two hours we lay there, each moment passing with the slowness of the ages, our hearts stopping and starting painfully as each group passed by. Jenkins reappeared with the mule, and we heard him clanking the chains over the ground to fasten on to the ankles; then heard him curse gleefully.

"That's one thing they forgot to do," came his chuckle. "Who'd know a mozo to have that much money on them?"

"Good God!" I shook Misamis. "Did Ulanda have all his money on him?"

She answered in the affirmative. I groaned, for that placed us all in a bad hole should we by any chance ever reach the coast. Hearing me groan, however, the girl whispered indomitably: "There will be some way, anyhow."

It threw a brace into me, that girl's spunk did, like a jolt of raw whisky. So I commenced thinking, thinking, with my eye glued to the knot-hole, and, when the cursing and the lights had at last died away from sight and hearing, and nothing stirred the somber night save the far-off croaking of the frogs in the bayous, I was crawling out of our hiding place with Misamis close behind.

We had talked it all over, and, though I wanted her to stay until I had completed the work, she absolutely refused.

"If he dies," she said simply, "then——"

I sensed her eloquent shrug. So she came.

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IV

THE problem that confronted us was this: the pen, albeit one part was used as a jail as I have said, was never locked at night; save about the rudely constructed cells. There was one guard who worked nightly—a swarthy fellow who claimed, in addition to the name of McCarthy, a heartful of white blood. This was doubted, behind his back. Many were the whisperings that he suckled from a Mex. mother; however, the ugly strain in his blood made him an excellent night-watchman on that particular job, for, not only had he kept a clean slate in the matter of escapes, but he had stopped even the thought of such an attempt by an atrocious murder that outrivaled in revolting details anything Larkins had ever conceived of. It was his habit to make the rounds every half hour or so, returning from which he would sit in a chair at the main door, smoking a cigarette and enjoying the cool night air.

Just where Ulanda would be, or how badly he was hurt, was a matter of conjecture. To get in and, if necessary, to make away with McCarthy was the first thing to think of. But, as we crouched at the warehouse corner waiting for McCarthy to leave the door, another idea struck me.

I had intended going after the safe in the commissary afterward, but, as we would be much better off if prepared for a get-away when Ulanda was released, I decided on this move first.

A young Englishman named Drake kept the store. I knew, of course, just where he slept, in a little room just off the store proper, and that I would have to pass his door before reaching the safe back of the counter. Ten to one this door would be open—Drake was a light sleeper—therefore it would be precarious in the extreme for even one, let alone two. I explained this to Misamis. She demurred and chafed at the delay, but in the end she followed me around the pen, hiding behind some old boxes while I crept forward to the commissary door.

As I might have known, it was locked. But there was a window—a swinging affair that latched on the inside. There were no glass panes, you understand; simply mosquito-netting on the inside, and a shutter hinged to the casing. This was generally closed at night. I slipped my knife-blade between the edge and the sill, felt the latch, moved it, and carefully raised the shutter.

Nothing stirred. That is, nothing except my heart. I began to realize that, as an adventure, safe-cracking is the simon-pure article. Though of course I didn't have to crack that safe. If I could get to it without being caught, I could work the combination of the old trap—my duties as checker having called me there frequently with Drake—whereupon my own wages would be collected and Ulanda's money replaced.

The floor seemed to creak dismally when I set foot on it. My heart thumped audibly. Just like the ticking of your watch, you know, when it lies under your pillow at night. So I fancied it sounded then; but no sound save Drake's regular breathing came to me, and I crawled across the space before his door, slipped into the aisle 'tween counter and shelves, and made the safe. There I paused, holding my breath.

I could still hear his breathing, however, so my own lungs worked more normally. By careful rubbing against my shirt sleeve, I struck a match without the usual snap. Luckily my eyes fell on a candle stub on the nearest shelf, so, securing it, I lit it, took off my hat, and used it as a deflector behind the stub. It served to concentrate the light where most needed and removed the danger of cracking matches. And I began twisting the knob.

AT FIRST I made the turns carefully, pausing at each click to listen. But I became more confident as the seconds went by and nothing moved, and made the last few revolutions rapidly. I had just released the lock when I felt a chill run the length of my spine, stiffening the hair at the neck oddly.

I had become suddenly conscious that Drake's even breathing had ceased. Too, there came the light crack of a board, as from a man's bare foot hitting the floor as he gets out of bed.

I'll confess that my nerves were going bad, but I was controlled enough to blow out the light and slip to one side of the safe, just as the rays of a candle within his room partially illumined the front of the commissary. I clutched my gun and waited, my mouth strangely dry, hoping against hope that he would not come in my direction.

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This, however, was not to be. Though I could not see him, I could hear his cautious footsteps, while the flickering light of his candle against the ceiling located his movements to me without having to peer round the edge of the safe. And so, after a muttered curse following his inspection of the window, he came directly toward the safe.

It was a tense moment. Would he fire at once, or would I be able to get the drop on him first? It set me thinking rapidly during those crowded seconds. I felt curiously like the rat in the corner, and had almost decided to shoot him without warning, when he gave me the opportunity I longed for.

He had stopped, just out of my sight, to peer down at the safe door, then turned his head to look out over the counter. In doing this his right shoulder and head came into view. Before he could turn, my gun was pressing hard against his ear.

"Don't move," I said in a voice I hardly recognized as my own.

I'll give that Drake credit for being a cool one. Though he gasped, he did not even drop the candle in his left hand. I reached out and took the gun from his right, then bade him turn round.

"Patten!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Patten," I answered. "Set that candle down, now, so that it's light don't show so plainly against the cracks of the window shutter there. Good. Now, you can have your choice—either sit quiet, while I finish this safe, or take the consequence."

"I would elect," he actually smiled, "to sit very quiet. I thought you were out in the jungles by this time. Never dreamt it was you prowling around in here. It's a rum go, though, Tommy, this safe-cracking, eh? Not exactly in your line, what?"

"That's neither here nor there," I retorted. "This outfit owes me two hundred and fifty pesos, and, besides that, a cool thousand Mex. to that Indian." I had the door open now, and was rummaging inside. "——" I exclaimed then. "The money box is locked."

I turned on him menacingly.

"I could have told you that," said he, his pasty face lit with a cunning smile. "I have it here."

"Then pass it over or I'll ——"

"Wait, just a moment," he interrupted, quite unmoved by my threat. "Tell me all about this thing you're pulling off—maybe I might help you."

I neither liked nor trusted Drake, but I suddenly grasped part of what he was driving at. So I told him, briefly, just what I intended doing.

"And if you get Ulanda out alive, you have a pack-train and will get to the coast, eh? Well, I'll give you the key on one condition—you couldn't get it without making a rumpus, even if you killed me, and you don't kill unless you're forced, Tommy—and the condition is this: take me with you, and say nothing about what I nib into, mind you, and the deal's on."

"You mean," said I, "that you're going to rob the Company?"

"And what were you intending?" he retorted. "Call it a better name, Tommy, old chap—deuce take it, they've robbed every one in the country. A game of cards, Tommy, and the coin all gone; well, what do you say?"

I REALIZED that he must have been deeper in the mire than a game of cards; but what could I do? One's outlook on life and morals are strangely changed under certain conditions. I was caught, red-handed; to kill him meant noise and possible detection; to leave without money was suicide.

"Come," he insisted, "one more gun will help a lot in a pinch—besides, I can help you more than you think with McCarthy."

"You're on," I decided. So together we went into the safe; and in two minutes the money was divided. "Might as well take some of this," he intimated as he stowed away some two thousand in bills and gold in a capacious money-belt.

But I refused. I was having a hard enough time quieting my conscience as it was. He chuckled low, closed the safe, and after a trip to his room returned clothed for a trip. I handed him his gun.

"No, not yet," he whispered. "I can handle McCarthy a deuced sight better than you, without half the risk. I'll be just walking around, you know, because I can't sleep, catch the point? Take my hat, and come on. It wouldn't look quite right, me walking around with a gun and my hat on."

"But what are you going to lay him out with?" I demanded.

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He showed me a billy, made of tapir hide and lead, protruding from his trousers band, whereupon we blew out the light and crept out into the darkness. It was agreed that when he came to the door with McCarthy's lantern and whistled softly we would be free to join him. Misamis and I were to wait at the corner of the building.

V

I REACHED Misamis, explained quickly, and led her to the corner. Faint rays in the east advertised the near appearance of the moon, which I cursed under my breath. The minutes went by in a long-drawn procession of breathless suspense.

Suddenly Misamis clutched my arm. "A lantern!" she whispered. "See? Coming across from Larkins's quarters?"

"My God," I whispered, "it is Larkins!"

We pressed farther into the shadows.

"If he discovers, will you kill him?" she pleaded.

I nodded grimly. My heart threatened to get beyond all control, however, for what had Drake been doing? Suppose he found Drake in the act of knocking out McCarthy? Suppose—well, a thousand and one fears chased themselves across my mind. If he should discover us—my pistol came out again, ready for him.

But he did not come near us. Instead, he walked directly to the pen door. "McCarthy," I heard him call, "McCarthy!"

From within the building came an answering voice. Larkins said:

"Is that —— hanging all right?" Again there was an answer—I could not catch the words—and this time Larkins grunted: "As long as he keeps breathing, leave him hang. I want him in the morning."

With a great sigh of relief we saw him move away to his quarters.

Naturally I wondered what had become of Drake. If McCarthy had answered—but now we heard a soft whistle.

When it was repeated the second time, I walked round the corner. I stopped short; for, in the door was a figure that, at first, I took to be McCarthy.

"Put down your bloody gun," said the figure with a low chuckle, this time in Drake's voice. "Rather neat, what, putting one over on Larkins, eh?"

I conceded that, for, though he was dressed in McCarthy's coat and pith helmet, he had run desperate chances. Had Larkins called him to the door, our hopes would have gone glimmering.

"Hurry now," he whispered; "McCarthy's bloody well asleep. I was just letting the poor beggar down, when Larkins had to come poking in."

He was hanging by the neck, was Ulanda, with his feet just touching the floor, the chains just slack enough not to choke him. In a trice we had him down. With a low cry Misamis took his bloody head against her breast, and as she did so the light of the lantern fell on her face. I have seen that expression on men's features, in the North, when, after a long hike, mushing through the mountains, they have come into a camp, their bodies matching their brains in absolute weariness, there to find shelter and food and warmth. It more than repaid me for what I had done.

But we had need for haste and, after Drake had pressed his flask against Ulanda's lips, the giant's physique reasserted itself.

"Tom!" he muttered, after a moment. "I haf faith—an' you come."

"Yes," cut in Drake, "but we'll have to get now, before this moon gets higher, or——"

The inference was enough. It brought us all on our feet, stealing toward the door and the mules, leaving the murmurs of the frightened prisoners behind us in that medieval stench.

Whether Drake finished McCarthy or not, I never had time to ask. He lay in a huddle off near the pen cells. We had just reached the door when a sound of feet on the porch petrified us all.

Instinctively we shrank back against the wall on either side of the door.

"McCarthy," called Larkins's voice; "oh, McCarthy!"

I WAS on the point of imitating McCarthy's voice, when Larkins cursed and stepped into the door. And then—have you ever seen a tiger swell with anger? So it was with Ulanda; his whole body trembled close to mine. One grunt escaped him, and he leaped forward.

I was with him, very close—so close that Larkins's instinctive swing missed the Indian and struck me heavily over the eye. I fell sprawling on the floor. Larkins's

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lantern had dropped and gone out, but ours still sat on the floor near the wall, where Drake had placed it. Its light relieved the darkness but little, so that during the space of the next few seconds I could distinguish nothing but a tangle of human forms whirling and fighting silently, grimly, with the sounds of crunching bones intermingling with their heavy breathing.

Then the mass split up and one fell, groaning aloud. He rolled against me so sharply that I tripped over him in coming up. It was Drake, badly stabbed—so badly that he never spoke again after that one groan—but I had no time to stop. I ran into the fight, swinging my pistol by the barrel as I came.

I had wondered why Larkins did not call out for help. Now I saw the reason. Misamis had her hand clutching his mouth, her fingers set talon-like, while with the other she was fighting at his right wrist. In this hand he held the dirk. Ulanda, as we discovered later, had knocked his gun out of his hand at the first assault; and now, as Misamis held one dagger-arm, Ulanda was slowly, but surely, bending the man's body to the breaking-point, his left arm being around the small of the back, the right up under Larkins's chin.

I brought a quick ending to it then; swinging as hard as I could, I struck Larkins over the head with the pistol butt. He relaxed so quickly that Ulanda sank to his knees before he could regain his balance.

I ran quickly to the door, but the camp was still quiet. Returning, I asked:

"What are you waiting on? Why don't you come?"

"I come," said Ulanda.

"Hurry up, then. Is Larkins dead?"

"No," grunted the big fellow. He was bending over Larkins, and now he picked him up, slinging him over his shoulder as one would a sack. I gasped, but he merely grunted, with an intonation that forbade protest: "I take him 'long. Come."

So, after seeing that Drake was dead, I followed the two out around the pen and off to their shack.

VI

THE incidents of escape are uninteresting. They had given up until morning, you see, and they had all gone to sleep, unconscious of the things happening. It was simply a case of using a little stealth, and we did, getting away four hours before daylight.

Picture, if you can, the four of us, just awaking from sleep in a canyon camp, toward evening of the second day thereafter. We had ridden all of the first night, the next day, and through the night as well, camping out of sheer weariness on the morning of the second day. Ulanda had kept guard the last few hours, and I saw him now, as I woke up, sitting near the bound prisoner and regarding him with a set, stony glare.

Emotions had followed each other so rapidly that I was in a sort of coma; but, after I had eaten the meal Misamis quietly prepared, I fell to wondering over the outcome.

He was Ulanda's prisoner. I had stepped out of it completely. Personally I would not have cared if Ulanda had staked him naked over an anthill and left him there to die. In color we were brothers, but he had outraged every moral in the Christian calendar, committed acts no decent man cares even to think of, and, added to that, attempted to wrong this Indian in a manner scarcely to be forgiven.

Perhaps, if he had shown some of the characteristics of a man, after being brought face to face with his deserts, I would have had some compassion; but the craven showed through the husk of him, till I hated to look at the brute.

"Well," I asked Ulanda, "is it going to be here?"

"Yes," nodded the giant, "here."

He looked at Misamis, who answered as though he had spoken:

"You are my husband."

She would sit in acquiescence no matter what he did.

Hearing this, Larkins wailed out: "My God, Patten, are you going to let them murder me?"

"Cook you, if they want to," I replied. The tears ran down his grimy, bearded face, and he whined, ending in a shriek: "You a white man, you? You nigger-loving scum of the earth, you'd stand by and see your own race tortured by ——"

"That's enough," I interrupted. "You're not of my race, thank God! You disgraced it by being born with a white skin. Get it over with, Ulanda; he pollutes the air."

Then Ulanda moved. He had scarcely

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opened his lips during the whole trip, and I had attributed his silence to studying over his revenge. But now this Indian, who had never read a book, who had the creed of retribution fast enshrined in his make-up, whose people had never known a word of kindness throughout their lives, who had never seen aught but greed and lust and filth among the human breed—this Indian looked at me, then at his wife, and shook his head.

"No," he said, "no." He reached out and began to untie the prisoner's legs. "Get up," he commanded, "and fight lak man!"

Somehow, it went through me like wine. After that month of contact with that beastly gang, I expect I was a little mad, a little out of proportion. Perhaps that was what enhanced the nobility of his act in my eyes.

"Do you hear that?" I screamed. "Do you hear that, you beast? You who boasted of your racial superiority, of your civilization, of your higher emotions? Who bragged of it and compared these people to apes? Do you hear it, do you?"

I expect that my eyes must have been gleaming like sapphires, that I appeared as mad as I acted, for they all sat stunned, watching me. As I say, this clean note of fairness, of manliness, had struck such a resounding chord in me that it not only thrilled me mentally, but physically as well. By George, that Putumayo district had almost knocked the bottom out of my confidence in the human race. I threw my hat on the ground, and ran at him, crying:

"You said once, you scum, that they never felt the least touch of gratitude, didn't you? Well, I'm going to show you something." I turned to the wondering Ulanda, and cried: "Do you remember what you said to me that day I shot the puma?"

Ulanda stood up slowly.

"Yes," he nodded. "I owe."

"Then, by George, I'm going to ask you to let this man go!"

A sick light came into his eyes.

"You mean that, my frien'?"

"I do," I said.

"Not even to fight him bare hand?" he asked.

I was inexorable.

"Not even that," I snapped.

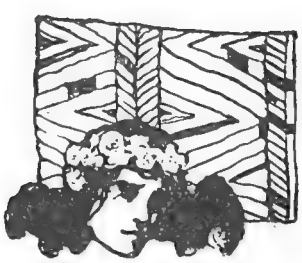
Ulanda sighed heavily, but bowed his head.

"I owe," was all he said.

With that I was at Larkins's side, completing the task of untying him. I jerked him roughly to his feet.

"Now," I cried to the wondering Indian, "you're released from your promise. I wanted to show this scum that a man is a man through his acts alone. Go at him and kill him!"

AND he did. Larkins fought like a rat, but it was no use. I do not like to recall the details of that fight, nor of the trip overland to Buenaventura, where we embarked for Panama. It was there I left them, for the fever got me there, and when I got over it I came on to the States. The money Drake had taken we left on his body, but the other was given to Ulanda as I had intended. When he saw the big work going on there, Ulanda got a job in the pit on one of the shovels. And that was the last I saw of Ulanda of the Putumayo, though you can gamble I'll not forget him soon.



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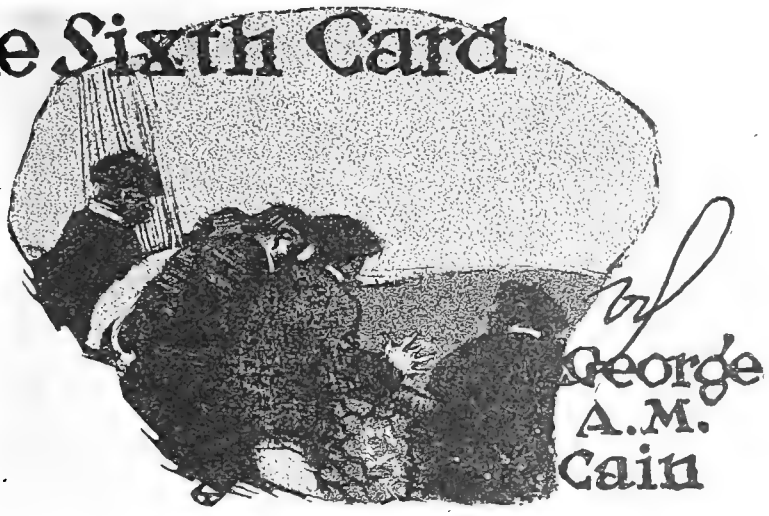
The Sixth Card



by George A. M. Cain

WHEN we ran our little steamer into the still water inside the atoll of Puawa, I think even Captain Wendover, one of the worst cynics I ever met, felt a certain touch of awe for the lone missionary for whom we had a consignment of supplies, medicines and some altar wine. We all crowded to the rail as a little *banca* was shoved into the water, and it was sheer hero-worship which held our glasses to our eyes until we saw that it was a white man who got into the boat.

We had no hope, however, of much conversation with him. Our crew had got together on the deck the things we were to leave for him, and we would let them down over the side with a rope and then let him take the rope along. For Puawa had been suffering the worst visitation of the plague most of us had heard of, the sort that puts fear into the heart of the most seasoned Far Eastern traveler. It had been six months since the last traders had beaten a panicky retreat, and ours was the first vessel which had ventured inside the lagoon in that time.

But, if we might not visit, we were very ready to raise a cheer for the man who was staying with the natives and seeing them through their ghastly misery at such imminent peril to himself. Wendover began it with a loud blast of the whistle, and we all took it up before Dr. Currain could have heard more than the faintest echo.

The only man aboard who seemed unmoved was Pedro, a rascally cabin-boy we had picked up in Iloilo a month before. I noticed that he was stripping off his clothes in evident preparation for a bath in the deep, clear water. I happened to glance his way as he clambered over the rail a moment later. I was at the end of the group by the rail and was probably the only one who saw him. He stood still for a few seconds, looking into the dark depths, which were tempting enough on such a day. Then with a grunt of disgust he clambered back inside the rail.

"*Mñga iho*," he muttered aloud—"Sharks!"

I looked down myself then and saw two of the long, mottled, yellow-striped tigers dully flashing back the faint rays of the tropic sun from far below the surface. I thought nothing of it at the time, or of Pedro. Sharks were common enough and Pedro would have been a madman to try to swim with them.

A MOMENT later the *banca* with its lone occupant came up under the side of the steamer. As we gazed into the bronzed but utterly weary and deeply hollow-eyed face of the missionary, we silenced our cheers and stood with bared heads. It was the most striking tribute to heroism I ever witnessed in the East. Then the captain cleared his throat and made an effort to assume his habitual easy drawl.

"Well, Doc, how are you?" he asked.

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"Quite well, thank you," the missionary responded a trifle weakly, and out of breath from the paddling of the light *banca*. "I want to go back with you. There is nothing more for me to do here. I buried the last of the poor fellows three weeks ago. I've taken all the precautions and I guess I'm safe enough. Can you take me?"

"Well, I guess!" Wendover cried without a trace of his drawl, and wheeled to give orders for lowering the ladder.

"Don't bother about the *banca;* it's not worth taking aboard," Currain called up.

He pushed it away with his foot as he caught the end of the ladder. He came up pretty slowly, and we reached him a dozen hands to help him aboard as he got to the deck level.

There was another silent moment as we looked him over. He was much wasted, but showed a big frame under his drawn skin. It was evident that he had run short of food supplies, but otherwise his health had suffered only from the nervous strain of watching his little flock melt away before the ravages of the disease.

Again Captain Wendover broke the silence. He blew his nose vigorously before he began, and he savagely dabbed at his eyes with his handkerchief as he finished.

"I guess you know I'm not very strong on missionaries; but if there were a few more of 'em like you, Doc, I'm d—d—hanged if I wouldn't be tempted to get a bit religious myself."

I've seen a good many men try to look modest when they have done something to win the applause of their fellows. Dr. Currain was the only one I ever saw who showed he really was modest.

"Thank you very much, Captain," he said with polite smile. "And would you let me have a little whisky. My stomach has got so flabby since the bananas gave out that I don't dare to use it till I've braced it up for the shock of food."

There was something behind the smile that seemed to hint the man did not care for any more applause. I was trying to think of something wherewith to express my opinion of his courage, but I gave it up. The others seemed to be affected the same way. What we had to say about this man who had spent half a year with his life in his hands and death all around him we said behind his back after that.

Currain seemed to improve rapidly. He was soon as lively as any of us. The result was that we pretty much forgot his being a hero and accepted him as a man among us. Perhaps this was best shown by the fact that, though the usual game of bridge in the saloon was omitted the first three nights out of deference for his cloth, on the fourth evening the captain jocularly asked him to join us in a game.

"Thank you," Dr. Currain responded amiably, and without a trace of that offended dignity which some clergymen might affect under similar circumstances. "I haven't taken a bit of exercise to-day. If you'll excuse me, I think I'll have a tramp with my pipe."

But he went out so hurriedly, as if he wished not to see us begin, that I felt quite sure he disapproved. Now, I have always had my own personal theory as to the right and wrong of gambling—a theory quite at variance with that of most of the ministers I have met. And a pet theory has ever been to me vastly more interesting than any game of cards. I conceived the notion of arguing the matter out with the missionary, who had impressed me as a man quite big enough to be independent of mere moral conventions. Since I was a very indifferent player, and there were four without me, I had no difficulty in excusing myself.

II

IT WAS a glorious night, such as one may never see outside the tropics. As I stepped out on the port-deck, and from under the shadow of the deck-house, I could have read by the moonlight. We had headed directly for Hongkong and were, I should judge, about a hundred and twenty miles due west of Manila. The China Sea, save where our screw churned it into brilliant phosphorescence, was smooth as some little lake. Sky and water were of intense blue, almost bizarre in its clearness.

As Dr. Currain had already disappeared, I started to go around the deck-house by way of the stern. Before I had reached the after-corner, however, he stepped from the shadow just in front of me. As he moved into the light I saw his right hand draw out of the inside of his white jacket and drop to his side.

I had noticed that gesture several times before when the doctor was preoccupied.

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In a way it had added to my respect for the man. Well enough I knew he was feeling under his armpits for the swelling glands that are the first symptom of bubonic plague. That he did this habitually indicated that he had lived in deadly fear of the disease, and emphasized his courage in staying despite the fear.

He stepped to the rail and stood looking down into the sea, apparently unconscious of my approach until I reached his side and began the preliminaries for my argument concerning gaming.

"I see that you do not approve of gambling," I started.

He turned toward me and seemed to bring his mind to bear on my remark with an effort. Slowly his strong features relaxed into a smile.

"I am afraid you have mistaken my leaving the saloon," he said. "That is what comes of being a parson. Everything he does is given a moral bearing."

"But you do disapprove of gambling," I reiterated, not to lose my argument so easily.

"No, not of that sort of gambling," he spoke slowly and judiciously. "It is all for play, and the stakes are not dangerously high for the men that are playing. In fact, speaking theoretically, no gambling is morally wrong so long as it is honestly conducted. It is a perfectly fair bargain in which each man agrees to give or take as chance or the relative skill of the players may result. It becomes wrong when a man risks money needed by others dependent upon him; and playing for high stakes is very apt to unfit a man for more useful ways of gaining money.

"I am sorry if you got the impression that I wished to show disapprobation, for I have always considered it a serious thing to set up any sort of false standard of morals."

"Yet, of course, you would not play yourself," I said. "Why not?"

"That," he replied, "is solely because I have, not a moral, but a personal, horrible feeling about cards. It dates from the one time in my life when I played for a real stake."

"You lost too much?" I ventured half facetiously, a vision rising before me of an innocent parson attempting to gamble with one who knew how.

But he did not smile at my clumsy sally. In the shadow his face grew intensely solemn as he answered, repeating the language of my query:

"I lost too much."

There was a startling sorrow in his tone that silenced me, and he himself did not speak for a minute or two. Then he turned toward me quite abruptly:

"Do you know," he said, "I have a notion to tell you about it, if you don't mind."

A strange eagerness now seemed to make him forget even the idea of sitting down, but I stood quite willingly; for he had proven himself an excellent story-teller, and I counted upon a distinctly humorous narrative—something very different from the tale he related, standing, oddly enough I thought until afterward, with his face turned from me toward the sea, as he leaned on the rail, his gaze fixed upon the blue-black surface, speaking quietly:

IT WAS in '96, the year after I came out here. I had acquired some knowledge of the dialect, and had been put in charge of an extensive circuit made vacant by the death of an older man. I had about a dozen islands with what we call lay-readers under me to look after the little congregations in my absence. It was my duty to visit them as nearly in rotation as transportation facilities would permit.

My predecessor had been a very able man. Most of the people were converted before I ever saw them. They had been deeply devoted to the missionary who had taught them, and they transferred that devotion to me. Perhaps it was a good thing for them, but it was about the last thing I needed.

You know, this thing of being the Lord's anointed has some terrible temptations all its own. It ought to weigh a man down with a sense of responsibility as great as any human being might bear. But to some it gives only the notion of importance a vast deal too great for any one to bear.

I think now that, when I first made up my mind as a youth to be a missionary, it was from a desire to gain applause rather than do to service. My father was a clergyman, and it was quite natural that I should seek my laurels along religious lines. I knew that he, that his clerical friends, that the good ladies who always hovered around the rectory, that my pious

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mother especially, would regard my determination to go to foreign lands as signally heroic sacrifice on my part.

They did, and so did the other students in the seminary I attended. Even in the medical school from which I was graduated afterward there were some who showed the same sort of sentiment. I was a young saint—a hero of the Cross—one who boldly laid down his life upon the altar of devotion!

As a matter of fact I wasn't anything of the sort. I was an arrant coward—I always have been. When it came to the last moments of actual preparation and leave-taking, only the shame of disappointing my friends kept me from backing out of the whole business. I believe I should have died of sheer horror of the life before me had there not been more pious people on the steamers to see to it that I was steadily fed up on the idea of my own glorious self-immolation.

Then I arrived at a comfortable missionary station and quickly discovered that most of the terrors were bogies. On every side were men who endured as great and greater hardships than mine for money. But the honor the natives paid me kept me up to my lofty conception of myself.

BY AUTUMN of that second year I had reached the pinnacle of self-importance. I think I wondered how the Almighty had ever got along without me in those islands. I know I believed the natives depended upon me for all mental, moral and religious enlightenment. My conceit was more than colossal; it was sublime.

Well, it sustained me through the only shipwreck I ever suffered. I had boarded a little trading vessel at my central station and was on the way to the very atoll we left the other day. We were within a couple of miles of it when the *baguio* caught us. You've seen such blows. This boat has been through dozens of them.

I think I would have been scared to death if I had not felt that I was of such all around importance that I simply could not die. And when the little ship struck that piece of rock—you may have noticed it about a hundred yards off the main entrance to the lagoon—when she hit there and smashed up like an egg-shell, but tossed me on a ledge almost out of reach of the spray from the breakers, I did not humbly thank God for my deliverance. I accepted it as a fresh token of my importance in His sight.

But another life had been spared from the wreck. I thought the other man ought to be grateful. I had avoided him during the two days' sail, and so had the officers and the other half-dozen passengers on the vessel. Everybody knew Miguel Jerez—Smooth Mike, he was called—knew him for what he was, one of the boldest, most unscrupulous bad men left in the East.

That he was a card-sharper was the mildest charge against him. It was generally said that he had not become an out-and-out thief and robber until he had grown so notorious as a dishonest gambler that he could not get even Hottentots to play with him. He was credited since that time with every crime from picking pockets to murder committed in a highway-robbery. He had escaped conviction for this last, but had served several terms in various prisons all over the world.

Two years ago, back in the States, I looked up his birthplace, as shown in the police records of most of the big cities west of the Mississippi, for he came from America. He was the son of a really good Mexican show-woman, who had trusted too far in the promises of one of the shell-game men who used to follow circuses in the old days. They told that she tried to make reparation for her sins by educating the child for the priesthood. He had inherited his father's nature. He was expelled from college and gave himself up to the career of a criminal.

You can imagine my horror when, about the time I had fully made up my mind that my own safety was due to the fact that I was necessary for the proper regulation of the universe, this dangerous reprobate clambered up the opposite side of the rock and greeted me with a mocking smile and the words:

"Hello, Doc! The devil didn't get you yet either, eh?"

I did not reply. I was too shocked and too indignant at what my sensitive vanity instantly took as an insult.

"But he has a —— good chance of getting us both pretty soon," my undesirable companion added, still grinning. "We two are the most edible things in view."

"It's only a hundred yards across there," I said coldly, nodding toward the headland of the main atoll.

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"But nobody ever comes this side of the atoll," he objected with what I already knew quite well. "Even if you missionary-men had left them good cannibals, they would never find out what a fine dinner they might have."

"You can swim, can't you?" I asked, still maintaining my frigid manner of offended dignity. "If not, I'll swim over, as soon as the water gets a little smoother, and send some of the natives for you with a boat."

"If your theology is as bad as that swimming guess of yours, you had better confine your ministrations in future to medicine," he chuckled loudly and impudently. "Do you see that?"

THE wind had already practically died. Though the waves were still high around us, there was a line from the rock to the main shore where the surface was comparatively smooth. I saw only a swirl where he pointed, which might have been due to cross currents from the breakers split by our rock.

"What was it?" I inquired.

"It was about three-foot-six of black fin," he responded. "Does that have any bearing on—your theology?"

His quip struck nearer truth than I would have cared to let him know. My shallow religion, made up two-thirds of self-esteem and the other third of undigested and ill-thought-out dogma, had sustained me when I had a crumbling deck under my feet, because I did not know that it was crumbling. It had been very well while I thought that a short swim and a couple of miles of walking would place me in the midst of my half-worshipful flock. It failed completely to meet the blank horror with which I comprehended that I was face to face with the alternative of starving or being devoured under fathoms of water.

I was never seasick but once. But the physical sensations which gripped me as I stared down into the swiftly moving water and myself caught a glimpse of that huge fin—the fairly painful weakness and the sinking nausea in the pit of my stomach—were identical with the qualms of a very seasick man when the vessel under him rides down deep into the trough of a wave.

I was trapped. In my own terror I forgot all about the other man who was trapped with me. There was not a chance in a million of rescue. The boat that had gone down was the only one calling regularly at the island. It would have called for me on its return trip, but its schedule ordinarily arranged for four visits a year. There was little trading then. Puawa was out of the way of tramp steamers by a hundred miles.

The rock was too low to be seen over the main reef by the natives. The village, on the opposite side of the lagoon, was hidden by a low forest of scrubby jungle besides. And, despite our religious teachings, the people maintained some superstitious dread of a devil in a cave at the mouth of the lagoon—enough to keep them from venturing within a mile of it. The only other islands they visited were in the other direction, and there is an opening on the other side of the ring of land deep enough at high tide for their boats.

The whole situation flashed upon me as a single thought, with every conceivable hope snuffed out in a breath. I was panic-stricken in an instant. The rain beating on my already soaked clothing seemed cold as ice—not bracing, but chilling, freezing, dragging the strength from my spine, driving the cold blood back on my sinking heart. I quaked and shivered. The sheer physical torture of my terror maddened me to the point of hurling myself into the seething, crashing waves on the seaward side of our perch.

"Don't do that," jeered Miguel Jerez, "it isn't good form for a missionary. They usually say prayers."

I could not have prayed. My tongue and the roof of my mouth and my teeth all seemed frozen together, despite the chattering of my jaws. Words would not form themselves even in my brain. But his sneer was enough to check my rashness. I sat down, huddled in a shaking, invertebrate heap of nerveless horror.

AND I stayed there for three days. Oh, God, that I might blot out of my memory the terror of those days and the deeper terror of the nights! Not the outward danger, but the inward terror of my soul, the terror that taught me too well just how much a coward I am.

My eyes were riveted almost the whole time upon that little strip of sea which separated me from safety, from food, from

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drink, from life. It is the thing I dream of yet when my digestion is bad.

The rain ceased at nightfall after the first day. In the morning the sea was as calm as this is now. And we could see the shark very plainly.

There was only one. Smooth Mike, in his jarring, reckless drawl, suggested that there had been others before the wreck, but that we had prevented the feast from being sufficient quite to go around.

"He's waiting to get his," Jerez grinned.

The last was true enough. Sometimes the huge beast would lie for hours on end, his long dorsal fin sticking above the surface, his enormous body pointing the broad tail straight toward the mainland, and the short, ugly, black snout over the long, fierce jaws straight toward us—and the eyes——

Ugh! Did you ever get a look into a live shark's eyes?

Colorless, I suppose they were, but there was a wierd, lambent glow in them that made them black flames under the clear water. As a boy I had wondered how there could be utter darkness in Hell while eternal fires burned there. I would have had the answer to my problem had I seen those two blue-black, gleaming little orbs on that malignant head.

Then the great fish would grow impatient and begin to swim in wide, interweaving circles; and we could see the dark, muddled mottle and the dull, yellow stripes. A tiger or zebra shark he was. You've seen them. By the way, there have been two of them following this ship ever since we left Puawa. They sometimes say the white shark is fiercer; but the natives here regard them as equally vicious and voracious.

Sometimes he would sink out of view and be gone for an hour or so. Once or twice I plucked up some scrap of courage or hope, and began to think of trying a dash for the island. I never got very far with such thinking. He was always back too soon—waiting—waiting always for the feast he seemed to know must eventually come to him.

He was there all through the nights too. I knew it by the long streaks of phosphorlight he would trail behind him when he moved. I could not sleep. I was fairly hypnotized, and it was not till the second night that I even lay down. I have often wondered whether any other man in the world was ever so cravenly afraid for so long a time.

And through it all my companion only added torture to my spiritless soul. His attitude shocked me. He, with a life behind him which, in my belief, meant hell in front of him, laughed in the jaws of death. He sang coarse drinking-songs; he swore long, ingeniously hideous oaths at the shark, and laughed to watch me flinch at their blasphemy. He would go down to the narrow fringe of beach and walk to and fro, and the shark would follow him. He even got the brute to leap out of water toward him, by standing at the very edge of it. Then he would laugh and apostrophize the awful thing that was to be his death.

"Not yet—not yet! Wait a while. I'll feed you later, you ——" and he would string out vile epithets gathered from the gutters of the world.

GROWING tired of this, he would get out of his pocket an indescribably dirty pack of cards, which were stained and sticky from having lain beside a plug of tobacco in his wet clothes. He would always ask me to play, and would then sit down with a guffaw and start that maddening game of solitaire, fitly called "Idiot's Delight." I have been told that no one could ever work out that game three out of five times without stacking the pack. Smooth Mike appeared to shuffle with utter carelessness, yet he always got the cards to come out to his satisfaction. But that seemed to me another piece of ghastly preparation for certain death.

Yet I think my sensibilities were worst wounded by his direct jeers at me. I have since wondered if he would have shown the same scorn for a priest of the religion in which he was brought up. I don't know. But his scoffing at my ministerial pretensions struck me as the worst of his blasphemy.

I was still the Lord's anointed in my own eyes. I was a prophet who should be received as a prophet. As I grew a little giddy on the third day, for thirst and want of food, though I felt no hunger or anything else but fear, I came to the conclusion that the man was a direct emissary from the devil, sent to tempt me to lay

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violent hands upon him in my own last hour.

The truth was, I felt no temptation. Jerez was as big a man as I. Nothing would have induced me to take the chance of having him push me into the water. But this devil's emissary theory served my conscience as an excuse in indulging sullen, bitter hate for my tormentor.

And that was my feeling for him when, in the afternoon of the third day, he came up from the strip of sand to the little flat space where I was perched. There was less of mockery and a distinct command in his voice as he spoke:

"Here, Doc, you'll have to play me one little game after all. You savvy poker?"

"No," I answered as sternly as my weak nerves would let me.

"It's easy—I'll teach you," he responded cheerfully. "I'll deal you a hand or two, and——"

"Oh, I know the rules of the game," I snapped.

I had played it in college for matches.

"All right—we'll play," he spoke firmly. "I've just thought of something.

"You see, our friend down there couldn't very well hold more than one of us. If one goes down there and leads him around to the far side before jumping into his throat, the other can swim ashore while he's licking his chops. Get the idea? We'll just gamble to see which one is to be the meal, and which one goes to the village to get a meal. Here, cut for deal. Best two hands out of three wins."

I drew back, shocked at first on general principles, but more afraid because I knew he could deal me and himself exactly what cards he chose. I was on the point of saying this when he added:

"Oh, I'll play level enough. I'm willing to take my chance, if you're not."

"To-morrow," I begged weakly.

His manner domineered my shaken will too strongly for me to make a firm refusal.

"To-morrow, more than likely, there will be fifty of them instead of one. They'll be getting hungry again pretty soon—the ones that ate up the rest of the ship's company. Cut for deal!"

The last was an impatiently snarled order. Automatically I reached for the pack of cards as he laid it in front of me. He frightened me by his manner into obedience.

Besides, on second thought, his proposal served to give me hope. My faith, not strong enough to hope against apparent impossibility, was aroused with the glimmer of a chance. It arose to the verge of some assurance when I saw that I had cut an ace. He turned up a king.

I was sure he had no extra cards about him. On my own deals he had no chance to cheat, since I would shuffle myself. I grew tensely eager. Providence, I felt instantly quite positive, would come to my aid. I was the good man, the needed man. Yet there was enough of the old fear in me so that, when he reminded me of his terms—two hands out of three to win—I wanted to make the dread settlement more remote.

"Make it three out of five," I urged.

"All right," he agreed with a shrug. "Will it be cold hands or draw?"

"We'll draw," I cried again, because the drawing would prolong the game.

"Suit yourself," he repiled, as I began painstakingly to shuffle the sticky, worn cards.

I SHALL never forget how my fears came back and hopes died at sight of the first hand I dealt myself. I shall never forget any card of that hand—or of the other deals for that matter. I had the deuce and trey of hearts, the six of diamonds, the eight and ten of clubs—one of those hands in which there is not a card worth keeping to draw to.

And Miguel kept his entire hand. I threw all of mine down in despair. In the hand I now drew was only a pair of sevens.

I did not trust him at all to keep his word and to deal honestly. I felt sure he was incapable of it. I saw that hope was gone.

"I won't do it," I shrieked, like the weak baby I was; "Neither of us would go into the water if he did lose."

"I'll go if I lose," coldly spoke Smooth Mike, "and I'll throw you in if you lose. So, play the game. Can't you beat that?"

And he flung down a hand in which the best was a lone ace. The instincts of the gambler for money had prompted him to hold them as a bluff—or the devilish instinct to torture me.

I laughed through chattering teeth, as I spread out my hand with its little pair. He grinned, I fancied, with a stronger contempt than ever, as he picked up the deck to shuffle. I am quite sure yet that he

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could not resist the temptation to fix his deal. He gave me three aces at the start, discarded three cards himself, yet showed three eights and two kings at the end—and this despite the fact that I had double cut the pack.

I won again on my own deal, and he won over another high hand on his.

"The luck seems to be with the dealer. I've played games like this before," he drawled with a significant curl of his lips, and handed me the deck.

I began carefully to shuffle. Miguel turned his head and looked back down into the water behind him. To do so he moved out of my line of vision, and I saw the shark close in by the beach, as if he knew his long wait was nearly over. His ghostly eyes, beneath a faint ripple, appeared to blink slowly, as a gluttonous savage blinks in sight of a feast.

Fear, more deadly than all I had suffered before, sent the icy chills through me—fear that luck would not be with the dealer on this last, decisive hand. My parched tongue grew thick in my mouth. I felt my throat tighten. I trembled from head to foot. Clammy perspiration broke out on my forehead. I grew sick—dizzy.

And my conscience, so perfectly trained to find moral reasons for all I wished to do or to avoid, harked back to the old-fashioned prejudice of my mother against card-playing. Long since I had outgrown it. Now it brought fresh terror—I was doing wrong; my punishment would be the loss of this last hand.

Apparently Jerez read my thoughts. He bent upon me a look positively murderous. He did not need to tell me what he would do if I stopped the play. And I had no will to nerve my muscles for that sort of conflict. I dealt the cards, but my self-pity broke out in a childish, inconsequent wail, which, I hope, was partly the result of my half-unbalanced mental frame.

"Oh, Lord! What would my mother think of this?"

Miguel's expression did not change, and his voice was utterly harsh and ugly as he inquired, or rather, demanded:

"Is your mother alive?"

"Yes," I answered, halting in the shuffling.

"Mine's dead," he replied shortly, and then, "What you waiting for?" he added in a gruff growl.

I DEALT slowly. My trembling fingers would hardly hold the cards. This time only Jerez had cut the pack. I built fresh fear on that. I knew that if I made a slip he would call a misdeal and I would be at his mercy. We picked up our cards simultaneously.

I thought I was fainting. It was the only way I could have gone any worse than I was. There was a pair of deuces in my hand. But, when Smooth Mike, after a moment's hesitation, dropped one card, my nerves snapped entirely, but in a different way. I broke out in the helpless rage of an infant. I raved. I cursed in language I had not dreamed I knew—the wild, blasphemous curses of a soul in blank, cowardly despair that turns to impotent hate against the God who punishes it.

And Miguel Jerez sat regarding me with a cold leer in his eye and his hard mouth curling at the corners, until he grew weary of waiting and curtly ordered me back to the game with his curtly spoken:

"One card, please!"

I mastered myself sufficiently to drop two of my own cards into the discard. I held out a king with my hopeless pair of deuces. I tossed him the top card from the remainder of the deck. It had been torn half in two, and I already knew it for the ace of diamonds. I picked up what I thought for the instant were two cards to fill my own hand again.

But the gummy sweetening of the tobacco-plug had made the face of the lower card adhere to the one beneath it. I saw, as I looked at it, that I held a sixth card, and I also saw that this card was a king.

I peered cautiously over my hand. Miguel had not detected the misdeal. He was smiling inscrutably at the card I had given him. I rather think he had not noticed its torn back as it lay on the deck.

My first hesitance was as to how to get rid of the extra card without being caught and losing the deal. My last hesitance——

Into my mind swept all the false notions of my own consequence. I thought of my value to the natives, of my great work. The man before me was a desperado, a blot upon society, a menace to the rights of his fellow men. I was the useful, the necessary one; he was worse than useless. And the extra king in my hand gave me, with the one I had held and the deuces, a high

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two-pairs to match against the two pairs his discard led me to believe he held.

I looked again to see if he had perceived the double thickness of my card. His eyes were still upon his own hand. As he held it up I caught a glimpse of the shark's dorsal fin through the little space at the crook of his elbow. I thought the hungry fish had moved still closer toward us.

That settled me. Hastily I laid my cards down face upward, with the extra-thick king in the middle, where Miguel would be least apt to discover its double edge.

He glanced across at them, and flung his own cards down so that they spread about the bare rock between us. His grin was less ill-humored than at any time before.

"My little flush of clubs," he drawled lightly, "would have been nicer without the diamond. The two aces aren't good enough for your two pairs."

HE GOT up, yawned as if the game had grown dull, then swiftly unbuttoned his soiled khaki coat and tossed it aside. He stripped off the undershirt he wore under the jacket.

I watched in silence. I could not realize what he was doing. The thing seemed impossible, absurd. I gave no thought at all to the fact that it was because I had cheated that he was preparing to die. I was stupified.

"It's up to you to get into the water about thirty seconds after I do. That shark may have appetite enough for the two of us," Jerez warned, as he discarded his trousers and stood, naked flesh to bait the hungry monster from me. "Maybe you'll say a prayer for my soul—though I'd rather you were a priest for that, since you're so damned little of a man."

He climbed down to the narrow strip of beach. I saw the black fin quiver. He started to make his way around to draw the hideous thing to the seaward side of the rock. The fin moved slowly along, keeping up with him.

And my conscience managed to stab through the thick skin of pride on my soul and the dull apathy of craven fear in my heart. I got to my feet. I shouted, though the rock was so small he could have heard me in a tone as low as I am speaking in now:

"Come back," I cried. "I held six cards—in that last deal!"

Even as I called him I thought of insisting that I be allowed to deal again, on the ground that the misdeal was due to the stickiness of his cards.

But he did not come back. He lifted himself till his face showed over the top of the rock, which was higher than he at the point he had reached.

"Ask your mother to say that prayer, then," he flung in my face, and dropped down again to the beach.

Before I could take a step toward the spot I heard the splash as he plunged into the water.

I did not start on the swim for the shore for several minutes. Remorse, cowardly as the dastard deed which brought it, stunned me. I was aghast at what I had seen and heard—aghast at what I had done. I dropped limply to the spot where I had sat so long. I snatched the king, the sixth card, from the face of the one below it, as if it might have justified me by proving of equal value. It didn't. Only my cheating had saved me.

And then, quite without thought of what I was doing, I picked up the card he had discarded to draw the diamond ace. The spots on it are more vivid in my memory than the lambent eyes of the tiger-shark.

It was the deuce of clubs!

III

DR. CURRAIN'S voice had sunk to a hoarse whisper as he uttered the last sentence. He paused, and drew his handkerchief across his forehead. His whole arm shook as he did it.

"You mean that he broke his own flush?" I asked, to break the spell which seemed to have seized him.

"To save me," the missionary said so low that he seemed to be talking to himself. "Me, the man of God, who had not the grace to resist the temptation to cheat him out of his poor, wretched life!"

His voice rose until it was vibrant in its hard self-condemning.

"Say!" he cried sharply, his tone as if he would shake out of me the answer to the question he put, "do you think there is anything in God's world a man could do to restore his self-respect—to even his account with decency and manhood—after *that?*"

It was a plea, an agonized shriek for

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mercy. I knew then that what he had told me had been gnawing upon his heart for the whole fifteen years since it had happened, and I did not wonder.

But the thought arose of the deserted plague-ridden huts of Puawa, and of how this man had stayed to minister to the dying natives, death all around him, death ever staring in his face, worse death than shark's teeth could inflict. And I recalled a dozen other stories I had heard of hardly less heroism on his part.

"I should say," I spoke warmly, "that you had made up for it quite thoroughly in the past six months alone."

"Nonsense!" he rasped out harshly. "I was taking chances then, only chances. I took all the precautions I knew of for myself. I came through alive, too.

"But, do you think that, if I were to have the opportunity to go to certain death to save somebody else, it would make it up? Would it quite meet the case?

"Supposing, just for instance, that, right now, I should discover that I had symptoms of the plague—the swollen glands under here, say——"

And once again, as I had seen him do before, he reached his right hand into his close-buttoned white coat, until the fingers were under the left armpit. He drew it out quickly and resumed his fevered, hypothetical question:

"Supposing I knew that, in three or four hours, I would be at a stage of the disease where my presence on this little ship would become an almost certainly fatal menace to all on board?"

His voice was rising again. During the narration of his story and after he had stood facing the sea. Now he had backed off a pace or two from me, but his keen, gray eyes were bent intently upon mine. There was something almost uncanny in his hot earnestness.

"And supposing—just supposing for an instant—that I had the courage, the nerve, the sand, in my highly Christian make-up, to jump overboard to save the rest of you—and to let those two sharks down there eat me up? Do you think that would make up—for that sixth card?"

It sounded hysterical to me. I was disappointed that he had not further recovered from the nervous strain of his half year on the plague-stricken atoll. I sought to turn his thoughts by leading them a trifle to one side.

"You're all off, Doctor," I said. "You should take into consideration that a man of your sensibilities and nerves, and the sort of coddling you say you had in your youth, can not for an instant expect to face death with the bravado of a desperate criminal who has risked his life so often as to lose all sense of fear. Why, some of these Japs up here will throw themselves away for the sheer dash of the thing."

"That's not the point at issue," he insisted. "The point is, would my doing that under such circumstances make up for what I did under those other circumstances? Would you, a layman without the theologian's possible tendency toward moral quibbles, consider the one a reparation for the other?"

"I certainly should," I said with a laugh, "But your rather gruesome supposition is quite outside the realm of possibilities, and a bit morbid, I should say——"

"It would make up for that sixth card?" he interrupted me, his face seamed and drawn in an eagerness for my repetition of the answer to his query, an eagerness which made me begin to have fears for his mental condition.

"Yes, yes," I drawled, trying to get him off by seeming weariness of the idea, "but, for heaven's sake——"

"Then, thank God!" he broke in again, this time fervently.

Before I could grasp the suddenness of his changed manner he had stepped toward me and seized my hand.

"Put your fingers up there," he commanded, guiding them up under the sleeve of his coat. "It won't hurt you—not yet. Do you feel it?"

"Good God!" I gasped, backing away from him in terror.

"No, don't worry about it; no danger at all as yet. There's plenty of disinfectant in my grip, if it will make you any happier. Help yourself. Thanks for listening to my painful yarn, and for your opinion about it. Good-by—and God bless you!"

IN BACKING away from him I had thought only of myself, frightened at the closeness of the dread disease. Now I rushed forward to thwart his purpose. I was too late. With a single spring, his one hand gripping the top rail, he vaulted clear of the deck and the side of the ship!

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Petrified, I stood gazing at the empty rail where he had been, trying to convince my reeling senses that he was no longer there. As stupidly I leaned over and peered at the glistening sea under the dazzling moon. It was without a sign, disturbed only by the milky, phosphorescent wake of the churning screw. At last I shouted, not the seaman's cry of "Man overboard," but the several names of the captain and the men with him in the saloon.

My teeth were chattering as with a fever-chill when they all tumbled out. My tone must have told them something of my horror, for they voiced in chorus the cry: "What's happened?"

In my bedazed condition I could not tell them. Though the words I did speak were without meaning to the others, without realization on my own part of what I was saying, yet my dread consternation was already turning to awed admiration, as I cried:

"It—it's Dr. Currain. He's up made for the sixth card!"

In the Shadow of Adventure

Reminiscences of stirring times in the land of the CZAR

by

George Andrejevitch Baklanoff

Baritone of the Imperial Russian Opera and of the Imperial and Royal Austrian Opera

THE ingenious director of the Moscow Art Theater, Stanislawski, who instructed me in the fundamental principles of acting, gave me, as well as his other pupils, these words as a motto:

"Don't play theater, play what you have lived—experience!"

It is often said abroad that modern Russian art has a unique character of its own, something that runs all through it, something that is shown equally by the poet, the musician, the dancer, the singer, whose names in the last few years have won world-wide fame. The words of Stanislawski give the explanation. All Russians who have realized their genius and applied it to artistic creation have as a background Life, Russian life and Russian experience of life. They have all gone into the same school, which does not lay down set hours or discipline, but which embraces the entire scope of human nature.

"Not to play theater but to play what one has lived." Always these words come to my ear. What is past rises before me when I stand on the stage; many colored pictures pass my mind's eye, some joyous, some sad, which apparently can not seem appropriate to the words of my rôle. Ridiculous events of my youth, tragic events which have been a part of my environment. And yet they are the things which give every kind of play the real meaning, the actual, sane view of life.

Here are some of those events:

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"AÏDA" À LA "FAUST"

IN TRAVELING with a touring company we came to the little town of Nikolajeff, at the mouth of the Bugg. Our trunks had been left somewhere behind on the journey, and when the evening approached we found that we had the music score of "Aïda," but only the costumes for "Faust." The manager was not a bit embarrassed; he decided courageously that we should play "Aïda" in the costumes and decorations of "Faust." I appeared as *Amonasro* in the costume of *Valentine*, and the Egyptian hero, *Radames*, appeared in the superb cloak of *Dr. Faustus*. All the slaves wore the medieval dress of yeomen, their faces were painted black, and they looked more like plain Black Peter. Involuntarily I recalled the second dictum of my master Stanislawski:

"Everything must have its style."

A BOMB IS THROWN

THE next morning a really strong and true heroic tragedy took place. It was ten o'clock when I heard a dreadful explosion. A dull thud like the fist of a giant shook the house in which I lived. The window-panes were shattered, there was a cracking and smashing everywhere. A pressure of air weighed on my chest, thrust against my throat as if it would strangle me. It seemed to me as if a great earthquake were about to sweep us all away.

And down below lay a mass of bleeding human bodies, torn flesh, fists closed up in cramp, disfigured joints, faces which had been petrified in death with horror. Not far away stood a carriage with two horses, and in it sat, leaning back on cushions, a pale man in a blazing golden uniform.

As I heard later, it was the Prefect of Police. A bomb had been thrown at him but had missed. On the same day all theaters were closed, and after nine o'clock in the evening no one was allowed to leave the house on pain of death. Patrols paraded the streets; their steps sounded hollow on the uneven pavement. Commands were shouted back and forth.

A WALK IN THE MOONLIGHT

IT WAS a wonderful moonlight night, such as you see only in the south. Contrary to public orders, I had opened my window; a strong scent of acacia blossoms filled my room. In the distance I could see the silver reflection of the Bugg River which attracted me in an uncanny manner and, heedless of all warning, I went out into the street.

A colleague, the tenor of our theater, accompanied me. We were soon to regret our foolhardiness. We crept along under the shadow of the trees, but the moon, piercing the green foliage of the trees with her silver rays, became our betrayer. Cossacks called to us and we turned to flee, running as quickly as our feet would carry us toward the theater. Behind us we heard the sound of horses' hoofs in full gallop, the breathing of their nostrils, the swearing voices. Breathless, we entered the stage-entrance and hid behind the door.

The Cossacks leaped from their horses, ran into the corridor, searched up-stairs and down-stairs, and did not find us. We crept out of our hiding-place at the right time, and now the flight commenced again. The running was of a special kind; the upper part of my body was perfectly quiet, and seemed to keep in the same position; only my legs moved. It seemed to me as if my feet did not follow my will but were guided by a force which lay quite outside of me. So they carried me on and on.

Even when I had reached the hotel there was still the feeling in my feet of the instinct of flight; they seemed to continue to desire to run.

It was as if I were standing on a rolling pavement, a black veil seemed to come over my eyes, and I had to clutch hold of the door-knob in order to keep myself quiet.

THE PREFECT AND THE PACKAGE

IT WAS an exciting time; dynamite outrages were the order of the day. We remained on for some time in Nikolajeff, but the public did not dare to visit the theater; houses were being searched day and night, for the Captain of the town, Tschuchnin, was still receiving anonymous letters threatening his life. One day when he returned home to dinner he noticed a packet wrapped up and tied with string on the writing-table in his study.

His idea at once was that it was a bomb. Immediately a company of pioneer troopers was called and the threatening box was

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lifted with all care and taken to the lonely bank of the Bugg River. And then from a great distance this dreadful instrument was shot at. Shot followed shot, the box lay in rags, but no explosion had taken place. In this moment the wife of the Captain arrived, furious. A box containing her new ball slippers had suddenly disappeared!

SINGING AN OPERA TO NO ONE

THE next year followed the Japanese war. The peace of the country seemed utterly shaken. I was at that time member of the Imperial Theater in Moscow. The sight of the barricaded town during those historic October days was a dark picture indeed. Columns of smoke rose at all corners of the town; the houses crashed together, armed soldiers in small and large groups kept order, but always one heard shots, and then the general strike commenced. The railways stood still, telephonic and telegraphic communication with Petersburg was interrupted and Moscow was isolated from the outer world.

The Imperial Theater has not the right to close its doors and give no performance without the express command of the Czar, so we found ourselves obliged to play comedies in the silent horror-stricken town. All streets of Moscow were wrapped in darkness, only the lights of the theater, which had its own electric station, shone forth. Of course there was no public, and we played the opera "Demon," by Rubinstein, for two evenings, to ghostly empty houses, no one in the orchestra, no one in the boxes, no one in the galleries, only just the staff, the police brigade, their lieutenants and the ushers.

Of course we shortened the opera mercilessly, as much indeed as was possible, so as to get out of this uncanny echoing place as soon as possible. A depressing atmosphere weighed down on us and suffocated the most beautiful melodies in one's throat. Finally a courier from Petersburg arrived, giving us permission to close the theater. We breathed freely.

THE GIRL WHO DISAPPEARED

CHRISTMAS time brought a few better days, but one did not dare to go into the streets. Martial law still continued, and it was almost impossible to keep in one's head all the daily orders and regulations of the authorities. Among others, there was the strict order to the citizens that when a patrol passed, or a policeman, the hands were not allowed to be kept in the muff or the pocket. It was an uncommonly severe Winter, and this order made it a torture to bear it in mind, for at every step one met soldiers, policemen, Cossacks or mounted policemen and other guardians of the public safety.

One forenoon I returned from a rehearsal, and was crossing the street, lost in thought, when I saw a girl who, with a countenance distorted with horror, threw herself before me and grasped my hands. For a moment I thought the strange girl had lost her senses in consequence of the terrors of the last few months. I regarded her sympathetically, the supposed madwoman who gazed at me so full of fear. But when I turned my face to the side, I noticed a patrol quite near me. I had evidently disregarded the order "hands up," and already the guns were at the shoulders, and their black muzzles pointed silently at me, like grinning death.

These have been my years of apprenticeship, and often now when I stand on the stage it seems to me as if somewhere in the orchestra or in the gallery sits that strange girl with her sad, horror-stricken countenance, who at the risk of her own life saved that of a stranger. And then it seemed to me as if I must sing for this strange girl alone, to whom I owe my life and whom I have never seen again.

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Aloysius and the Tombstone Party

by Rob Reed McNagny

HUMANITY is miscellaneous. But at that it's all got a soft spot tucked away somewhere down underneath its Prince Albert. Be it ever so shiny there's always a homey place to sink the hooks in. If this tombstone gink with the tearful ways hadn't had a shell like the white rhinoceros there'd be consid'able more markers in the graveyards of northern Ohio, I reckon.

And if Green River Al hadn't risked his all—an' another fella's—on a thirteen-to-one shot named Annie Moore, the swallas would-a come chirping homeward a good many seasons before a certain friend of mine got to plunging in philanthropy, believe me. It's the soft spot that makes people do the funny things.

This Annie Moore horse I was speakin' of ran straight up. She made more motions than a bush-leaguer trying to qualify in fast company, but she didn't cover no noticeable large territory. When Al an' me first seen her she'd have fooled anything but a stop-watch. I thought myself—but all that was after the little widow woman an' Century. I got to give her first money, and let the story trail along with the rest of the field.

Me and Aloysius Slater was workin' northern Ohio that Summer with a little gilt-edged proposition in minin'-stock. We'd increased the money stringency consid'able, and was coming down the west side when we strikes Century.

I don't guess Century—it seems a shame to waste capitals on that town—is on the map. If it is, they don't know it yet down there. Yo' know that old song about "Nothin' from Nothin' leaves Naught"? Well, you could rub out "Naught" and paint in "Century" and you'd be handin' the town a compliment. No Carnegie library, no hotel, no livery-stable—none o' the enlightenin' inflooences of civilization.

While we worked the territory I was farmed out with a widow woman out on the edge of town. There wasn't anything boarding-housey about *that* place, I tell yo'; it was like visiting somewhere. My landlady was a pretty little woman with even teeth, big helpless sort-a eyes, an' the finest pair of youngsters I ever seen. The first night she give me the harryin' details of the late Henry's demise. An' when she was through she just caught her breath in a little sigh and give me that helpless, big-eyed stare, an' I wondered how she was ever goin' to buck the cold, cold world till them tots was big enough to pursue the nimble shekel to its nesting-place. She didn't look overly heavy in the bank-roll.

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WELL, Al and me was pretty busy the first few days with our mining-stock. I didn't get to see much of the little widow woman. Twice as I come in, I run into a tall, smooth, nighthawk-looking person the widow interduced as Mr. Munson, but I always side-stepped as soon as I could and beat it up to my room. Munson didn't look any better to me than the picture on the toothache drops, an' I couldn't figger how exchanging loose conversation with him would ever make anybody rich.

But I might-a known he was phony. 'Long later in the week I stopped to call on a neighbor. She was some fidgety and nervous, and after I'd warbled my little song and let her bat her eyes at my block of certificates without shakin' her strangle-holt on the family stocking, I up and asks her why. It didn't take long to get the story.

Seems this Munson party, as she lays it out to me, was a knight of the crape, or so alleged. He represented the Rinecabo Granite Works of some place or other, an' his job was hiking around the country followin' the death-rate. As she goes on, I could see the rest of it fifteen minutes ahead of her finish. It wasn't hard, after you'd had a flash at the tombstone party.

The game run something like this. Crowdin' close on the heels of the funeral and flowers come this Munson party with his lithographic art studies, order-book, and an easy flow of crocodile tears. Touching picture of the neglected grave; hasty order; collect in advance; *Good night!* Munson folded up the money and drifted, and while she didn't say so, I couldn't see any real good reason why he should bother about deliverin' that tombstone. A railroad ticket was a sight less expensive, and there's lots of people dying.

"An' he jest talked beautiful about Willum," the woman finishes up mournful. "Toward the end he almost broke down an' cried."

But I wasn't thinking about her, bad as it was. As I set there figgering out the layout, it was my little widow woman an' her two kiddies that come up before me, an' I couldn't help remembering the little squeeze I'd seen her arms give around them youngsters. A woman like that wouldn't stand no chance with the tombstone skunk. I tell you *I* felt some like weepin' too when I thought about her and them two kiddies.

Two hundred an' fifty big, iron dollars he'd rung out-a this woman, and I guessed that was about the size of the little widow's stack. I folded up my mining certificates and beat it fer home—er, I mean *her* house—as fast as I could.

But I was late. I could tell by the fluttery, misty look in her eyes the agony was all over.

"This Munson party's been here again?" I guesses, as casual as I could.

She looked up guilty and startled, and then she flushes a hot red.

"Um hum! He was here early in the afternoon," she says. "He's gone away."

She seemed to be kind-a puzzled at my askin'.

"Two fifty, I suppose?" I sighs.

And she flushed again and nodded. Somehow I couldn't look in them eyes of hers and tell her the truth; it would-a took a butcher to do that. But I laid awake a long while that night. From my windows I could see the lights of the poorhouse a mile out, and for the life o' me I couldn't help thinking about that helpless little woman an' the two youngsters. They were awful good kids.

WHEN Al come in next morning I lays it out to him. He'd met the widow woman too, bu the looked at me now for quite a spell and then he laughed.

"The corrodin' tooth of time is leavin' its mark on you, Lou," he says. "You grow sentimental, an' sentiment is about as becoming to you as brass earrings. You can't expect to appoint yourself guardeen of every helpless female that cuts your trail."

It made me sort o' sore the way he takes it, but Aloysius goes on as if everything was settled:

"It comes to me, little playmate, that we shall migrate. We have tarried already too long in this fair spot. The horny-handed son of toil is beginnin' to act wary and look askance when I flash the pretty yellow certificates, an' it wearies me. I don't hanker for any of them picture-show chases with a hairbreadth escape while this brand of weather lasts."

Al had the late D. Webster lashed to the mizzenmast when it come to ground and lofty conversation.

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"It therefore being unanimously agreed," he says, "that the firm of Waler and Slater, Specialists, execute a change of base, the matter resolves itself into a question of where."

He thought a minute.

"Indiana has been laughed at so long you couldn't retail five-dollar gold pieces to the natives at four ninety-five over there. But lookin' northward, what do we see? The glad mitt of Michigan sticking right out into the lake to welcome little hustlers like you an' me. What say you? The cheese district on the north joins hands with the paw-paw belt on the south in callin' you, Mr. Waler."

Al always argues both sides out for himself, and then tells you what to answer. When he's through there's nothing more to be said. We went.

II

IN THE morning we was sliding along between green fields that didn't have no resemblance at all to the color it shows on the railroad folders. Al was in splendid spirits. He said he didn't know where we were going, but we'd get there that night. He said he didn't like the Indians up around Pontiac, they were hard to get to at Flint, he didn't care for Coldwater, Kalamazoo always made him think of wild animals, and he couldn't stomach Hart, but that up near Lansing we ought to be able to *stick* somebody. We—well, I'll leave it to you if we did.

We struck Crabapple at dewy eve of the first day, an' found the lid off and the town doubled up in the throes of a county fair. If there's anything that stirs the grief under my wish-bone it's fair week in a yawp village. The town was full of concessions, hoss-races and peanut-shells, an' the country round was as empty as a coal-bin in May. There was absolutely no one to talk to, so we laid up for a few days to recreate.

This here partner of mine had one weakness—ponies. He was like a woman about that. Show him one of them three color trippers that look like a map of the eastern hemisphere, an' it didn't make a bit of difference whether she was curbed, spavined, wind-broken or hyperboled, he'd back her against the field at any odds the fellow in the spotted shirt had the conscience to let Al force into his unwilling mitt.

They had a jaunty lookin' filly there they called Annie Moore. As I said a while ago, she was a sweet little horse an' pleasin' to the eye withal.

"*Jove!*" cries Al, excited the minute he trains eyes on this calico colt. "I wish the fella that wrote all that about 'the human form divine' could cast eyes over yon glorious creature. My dust goes down on the little fairy there."

"Al," I says earnest. "Hadn't y' better see this crazy quilt on parade before you begin bettin' next week's wages? The' ought to be some one around who's seen her in harness."

"Huh!" grunted Al sarcastic, looking across at a couple o' shop-worn has-beens they was a-leading up and down. "Lou, you're a well-meaning partner, I know, but what you don't know about equine architecture would make a large and interestin' volume on man's best friend. . . I'm backing that butterfly to do something."

The filly was booked at thirteen to one—which didn't look encouragin' to me. But I went in the grand-stand an' seen the race; there wasn't anything else to do. They said it was a good race. I don't know. I didn't realize how much it meant to me till afterward, but I was interested. Annie Moore went to the post like a poisoned dog that had got over it. She was game; I'll say that for her.

She fell down three times in the first half mile and each time she got up again and went right on with the race. When the bunch of platers come under the wire at the finish I kep' lookin' for something with white spots on it. I counted eight of them and kep' *on* looking. The judge rung his bell again and looked up the stretch, bored. The band played, an' a kid on a wheel rode up the track to see what was the matter. Pretty soon he come riding back and announces that they was coming.

ABOUT half an hour after the start there was a yell and Annie Moore come two-stepping down the track like a crippled goat, nodding to several acquaintances in the crowd, an' looking real pleased with herself.

I took Al by the arm and led him gently back to the hotel. When the bell-hop had brought him a tray of first aid to the

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disappointed, I looked my partner over calm and kindly.

"Al," I says earnest, "you have my sympathy, an' it's all free gratis, for nothing. Let this be a lesson to you. I reckon you've been pan-handlin' long enough to realize that all ain't girls that titters, and that the race ain't always to the swift—*lookin'*. That kind of a horse has more relatives than any other kind."

Al didn't say anything for a long time, but he set down on the bed and stuck his feet on the bureau.

"Lou," he says finally, "how much kale did we have in the treasury?"

"*Did* we have?" I asks, sitting up. "Why you ought to know; you've got the belt. It was four hundred last count."

Al got kind-a red at that, an' felt of his collar.

"I got a confession to make, Lou," he says kind-a husky. "I was so cocksure of that crippled skate to-day I went an' laid my share of the dust on her at thirteen to one. An' then, as I was starting off I got to thinking what a shame it was you weren't getting aboard a good thing that was just as easy as dreaming it, and Lou—I—well I just dipped into the treasury and put up a hundred for you."

He stopped a little and looked at me.

"Well," I says after a minute, "it's a good thing it was only a hundred. I'd-a had D. T's if I'd known that paralytic was carrying anything of mine. But we'll call it a loan, and you can pay me when you have it."

Somehow my generosity didn't seem to sooth the sufferer's troubled brow any. He kep' a-lookin out-a the winda across at the court-house.

"I went back to look at that Waltz Dream mare again," he went on in a calm, dead sorta voice; "an'——"

"You needn't go on with this harryin' tale," I remarks. "Let me see that belt."

He fishes it out limp and empty from a side-pocket.

I looked at Al. Al looked out-a the winda some more.

"Aloysius," I says, when I could think at all, "where you ever got the idea I was a eelemosinary institution for tired bookmakers I don't know. But I'll play fair with you. Unless I'm laborin' under a hallucination I got a two hundred dollar drag comin' to me out-a future profits, an' we'll just——"

But I had to stop right there. I'd been standing at the winda looking out while I talked, and all at once a figger across the street looms up kind-a familiar. It was my tombstone party. Somehow the sight of him gloomin' it along through the crowd made me so hot all of a sudden that I forgot about Al and was startin' out on the war-path, when the other end of our sketch stops me. He'd seen the gink over my shoulder, and from the sudden light in his eye I knew there was somethin' working behind that statesman brow.

"Wait!" he says gently. "You always was impetuous, Lou. You say yon creature of the nightmare face is making money?"

In job lots, I tells him.

"Dear me!" Al sighs, but there's a twinkle in his eye. "How wicked are the ways of men! And yet, there's something refreshin' looking about that jasper. Do you know, Lou, you ought to cultivate this man. It's barely possible your gentle ways might reform him."

He sets down and communes with himself for quite a spell.

III

LONG about then Al drops out-a sight for a while. He tells me he's going on a long journey, but he'd be back when I needed him. But I was so busy recalling old times I most forgot about Al. This Munson party was layin' up like us, till things cooled off a little, an' it wasn't hard for him an' me to get chummy. We taught a barkeep how to make things with cherries in 'em, an' went to the races, an' had a pretty good time for a day or two.

Mr. Munson was smooth all right, but he wasn't a by-product of no blue-grass country. He was inclined to know nothing about horses, and consequently he liked to see 'em run. So we spent another afternoon at the races, where we had the excruciating pleasure of seeing that spotted mare Annie Moore lay down and go to sleep on the track an' some other funny things. Altogether that was a right pleasant two days we had in Crabapple.

It wiggles along to the last day of the show. I don't recollect just how, but we happened to be out in the paddock at the track a-looking over the prospects when

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they led out Annie Moore to warm her up. Munson chuckles when he sees that spotted fever equine.

"If that heirloom belonged to me," he says laughing, "I'd have her stuffed and ship her around over the country. She'd make better time that-a way."

Right behind us I heard a sort-a gasp and the next minute a rubish-looking young simp with boots and a clover-hay drawl was wadin' into us.

"*Heirloom?*" he hollers. "*Stuffed?* You know who you be talking to, young fella? I'm the owner of thet critter, if ye wanta know, an' she's the grandest little pacer thet ever kicked mud in a stake-winner's front entrance. That hoss can *race*, I tell y'!"

"That relic?" chants the tombstone party, throwing back his head and givin' a fair imitation of the horse-laugh. "And you own her, you say?" He turned to me still laughing. "Ain't it pathetic?"

They had it hot and heavy that-a way for three or four minutes. The simp kep' gettin' madder and madder until he fairly seemed to fritter on the surface; an' the tombstone party only nudged me and kep' on cool and cheerful. When he learned that young Hayslip, or whatever his name was, had just bought the plug, I seen a cold sorta glitter come into his eye but he kep' right on smiling. And the other guy kep' right on getting madder.

"Look here!" he yells, aquiverin' with excitement and fishin' up a roll of bills as big as the abstract of title to a down-town block of real estate. "Money talks, don't it? You're so sure of it I'll just bet five hundred dollars, by gosh! that the little mare wins her race to-day. Now's yer time to holler, Mr. Smart Alec."

"Ease the hooks into the lallop. It's easier than selling tombstones," I whispers.

But my advice ain't necessary. The tombstone fella is just as eager as the other one, an' while he's digging up his rhino the yawp turns to me trusting like.

"Yer a stranger t' me, Mister," he says. "But you look honest. Will y' hold these stakes for us until after the third race?"

YOU know, it's amazing how far an honest face will go toward making a living. Here was me, an' a crook, an' a stranger I'd never seen before, an' in two minutes they'd appointed me executor with the will annexed and there's a thousand dollar wad keeping company with my Ingersoll. I was too moved for words so I kep' my mouth shut, and by the time I'd come to we're moving into the grand-stand for the first event.

There's a kind-a blank in my mind concerning them first two races, but about the time the paralytic was being led home under the wire your old friend Lou was loitering along toward the station waiting for Al. It was train time an' he was overdue, when I heard somebody tearing up the road behind me. I was some infested with unpleasant thoughts and anticipations when I seen the red glare in the eyes that went with it.

"Look here!" yells the tombstone person, flourishin' a nasty bunch of fives in my geography. "What does this mean? I knew there was something crooked about you, you welcher!"

"Excuse me," I says dignified, brushing off my shoulder where he had grabbed me; "but you've got the wrong number. This ain't no toll-station."

"W'y you pirate!" he howls. "You hand over that money pretty quick or we'll know why! You're not cute——"

Just then Aloysius, all washed up and as different from the young simp of an hour before as pie is from dill pickles, steps up and taps my tombstone expert on the clavicle.

"Hello, Al!" he smiles friendly.

"Al?" yells the piker turning around. "Who the —— is Al?"

Aloysius pats him on the shoulder kindly and flirts his left lapel back so we could catch a sparkle of the German-silver star he always wears for emergencies.

"Pretty rough stuff, brother," he shakes his head sadly. "You hadn't ought to of tried it on with me. You're Albert Hyronimus, the greatest con man since Barney Carney, that's who you are. Just because I happen to be chewin' a straw you hadn't no cause to spot me fer a part of this pitcheresque scenery. Let's see. It's—tombstones now, ain't it?" The other give a start. "The same old widows and orphans stunt. I'm hep, Al. I' been watchin' you all the afternoon."

The rummy begun to sweat in real earnest by this time.

"I never heard of this party," he says, singing soft an' low to what he'd been a minute before. "You're makin' a great mistake."

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"I know I am," grins my partner pleasant, looking at his watch. "But I'm due to catch this train, and I ain't got time to lock you up and wire Chicago. Take my advice, Al, and fade away. They've added another fifty to the reward out for you."

IV

IT WAS ten o'clock that night when Al wakes me from a sound dream in the smoker by the simple expedient of beating on my head with his grip.

"Wake up, little playmate," he says cheerful. "We get off here."

I was too sleepy to ask questions, but I wondered why he ever picked out that weed-station. There was nothing but one street, an' a good husky man could ha' stood on the platform and hid that from view without any trouble.

I didn't stand on it but I said I'd wait. I sat down, an' watched Al trail off up a winding road through a flock of mud-puddles. My head was still fuzzy on the inside, an' I don't remember anything more about it, except that when I woke up again we was in a train movin' westward, and Al was setting across from me looking virtuouser than a young man with his first wife.

"Why and wherefore?" I demands, reaching back into my recollection and shaking it. "Whatever did we do back there?"

Al cleared his throat nervously and looked out-a the winda for a long time.

"God knows!" he says thoughtful. "I hate this big, fat, rotten State. But at that, Lou, there's somethin' kind-a pleasant in correctin' other peoples' mistakes. You ought-a of saw that little widow woman put out her arms an' hug them children. It was worth the three centuries to see the tears in her eyes when she thanked me."

"What?" I yelled.

I must-a spoke a little forceful, for the brakeman stood up in his end of the car and looked back at me.

Al looked kind-a funny, but he told me again about givin' the little widow back her money.

I waited a minute to get my breath back, and while I waited some loose conversation of Al's come siftin' back through my intelligence.

"The corrodin' tooth of time is leavin' its mark on you, Aloysius," I says sarcastic. "You can't expect to appoint yourself guardeen of every helpless female that cuts your trail."

"But why the quotation marks?" inquired Al wonderin'ly. "Wasn't that what you wanted with this Munson boodle?"

"It might have been," I told him, "once upon a time. But time works strange changes, Aloysius. You'll recollect I got better acquainted with this same tombstone party up there at Crabapple. Among other things——"

"You can trim it as short as you please," says Al disgusted. "Let's make it a quick curtain."

I looked at him a minute—just long enough to see him begin to squirm.

"I will," I murmurs sadly. "She's his sister!"

"What?" says Al.

And the brakeman stood up and looked back again.

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Silver-Shoes

By

George S. Reed

SYNOPSIS—Roderick Marley, having killed in a duel a Buckingham retainer, is smuggled out of England on a ship bound for Jamaica by his powerful brother, Sir George, to bring back a maid, daughter of Dudley, a Cromwellian general, and betrothed when a child to Sir George. Dudley, banished, has taken his daughter to Jamaica and vanished. From his buckles Roderick is named "Silver-Shoes" by Shattuck, a buccaneer returning to Jamaica from a secret mission. On the voyage Shattuck and Silver-Shoes take command and capture an attacking Spanish ship. At Port Royal, Silver-Shoes buys the freedom of a lad, Romeo, raised by pirates, an admirer of Shakespeare and about to be sold for debt to Red Dick, a buccaneer. Silver-Shoes finds Dudley a mutilated imbecile, called "Blunt-Nose," and kept by the buccaneers. Dudley and Silver-Shoes overhear Shattuck, the famous Morgan, and Wilkes of the Governor's Council plot to capture Panama with the connivance of the English king. Dudley betrays to Silver-Shoes that his daughter Margot is in Panama and he himself only shamming imbecility. Shattuck discovers Silver-Shoes listening.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE HOUSE OF BLUNT-NOSE

THERE was a momentary silence as I came into the glare of light. Both men were standing, swords drawn, about a table reeking with the rum spilled on it in pools.

Shattuck sat down facing me, laid his blade amidst the drippings, its handle within grasp, and leaning forward, chin in hand, contemplated me with satisfaction. His attitude reassured the others, for they resumed their seats.

One was short and fat, with a red face and small shifting eyes. From his laced velvets, I judged he was somewhat of a dandy and the Governor's representative. The other was the famous Morgan; buccaneer, or freebooter, either would honor him, but pirate, never, at least to his face.

He was of medium height, sandy complexion, somewhat splotched from riotous living; dressed in somber clothes, and withal the most intelligent of the three. A mass of long red hair was caught behind by several colored silks, and his drooping whiskers were twisted and waxed. The square set to his jaw, the fearlessness of his eye, the high forehead, bespoke great determination and strong courage.

"Y' perceive, m' mates, something was wrong," said Shattuck grimacing. "While we 'ave thought ourselves secure, this little cock-boat was anchored 'neath our stern, where not a confidence hath escaped 'im. What, ho! Fox! Fox, I say! Come 'ither. An' I go for ye, y' ll not come at all!"

I started to speak, but Shattuck jammed his fist upon the table, overturning the cups, rocking the large bowl itself, and spattering rum in all directions.

"Y' ll 'ave fair chance soon enough, m' pryings Silver-Shoes. Till then, hold y' tongue!"

The youth came unsteadily before us, having knowledge of my plight and his own, for his face was like a lily.

"Ha, little devil!" cried the pirate.

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"What of this?" He waved his hand toward me.

"I know him not—even his name, most worshipful," said the youth shivering. "He forced entrance of an hour past. I had neither strength nor weapons to prevent."

"Y' had the mind to hide him."

"That fault is mine," I broke in.

"I told ye keep quiet!" roared Shattuck, seemingly uncertain whether to have at me or no. So convinced was I the next few minutes would witness a stiff fight betwixt us, my left foot advanced into position and my arm dropped to my belt. This amused him, for he wiped a faint grin with his hand and turned to the youth. "Little Fox, ye hid 'im. The truth now—didn't ye?"

"Y-e-s," faltered the lad.

"What hath 'e said to ye? Speak naught save truth, else all the gold of Christendom can't ransom ye."

"He said he was from London to see Blunt-Nose, and asked my name, and how long I had been here; then you came."

Shattuck growled at the speaker, who retreated to a corner. He turned to his companions.

"'Tis the brave sword-sticker of the *Andalusia*," he explained. "Of sharp tongue an' nasty manner, but I'll vouch, Captain, there is naught else 'gainst 'im—save 'is purty shoes." Here he paused to grin at me. "An' now, Siller-Shoes, y' heard the good word I sez. Finish it by y' pert tongue, let it get y' out o' trouble as well as into it, an' tell our Captain why y' come to this cursed land."

"I was a soldier of York's troop," I replied, "but a duel with one of Buckingham's gentlemen forced me to fly. Through my brother's help I gained the *Andalusia*. As for the lad, he speaks truly, for I did, indeed, force my way within."

"Let the lad be," said Shattuck impatiently. "What's y' name?"

"Rodney Marley."

"Sir George is y' brother?"

"Yes."

"Why such haste in seeking Blunt-Nose?"

"My brother caused his banishment. 'Twas fitting he should send the King's favor of return. This was made possible through my folly and I have thought only of quick accomplishment."

Here Morgan interrupted.

"Dick, if what he hath said of Sir George be true, there's no need to fear Buck's hand in this. He is no friend of Marley's. Tell Pete to fetch Straight-Eye."

SHATTUCK departed and a few minutes after returned accompanied by a tall, surly looking ruffian surrounded by daggers and pistols. With a nod to those in command, he advanced upon the bowl and took a huge draught, then, placing his arms akimbo, threw his head back and looked questioningly at the others. Perceiving me, he gave an exclamation and laughed defiantly. Morgan and Shattuck exchanged glances. Then said the latter,

"Straight-Eye, y' know this person?"

"Know him, masters? Aye; 'tis Marley's brother. Him what found me out and drove me from England. I bear ye no ill will, Roddy, and here's a hand on't."

I ignored the scurrilous handclasp of such a knave as I knew him to be, and stared at him till his eyes wavered and fell. To hide his discomfiture, he laughed boisterously and turned to Shattuck.

"Well, masters, here I be. What's the service?"

"To identify the lad, which y' have done. Begone," said Morgan.

Straight-Eye, formerly Charles Lawson and servant to Sir George Marley, annointed his innards with another great draught and started for the door, leering at me as he did so.

"Had I known what was the call, and that y' are so uppish in this land of equality, Roddy, m' boy, I might have been less kind," he said, taking vast satisfaction in the use of my given name.

'Twas small loss to see his figure fade into the night.

For a few minutes there was silence, during which I felt Morgan's eyes on me reflectively. Finally he spoke:

"Marley, y' are new to the land and to us, and y' know neither its ways nor our own. Hadst been otherwise y' would never have been within that room. As it is, y' have heard our plans, y' know the King's permission, y' know where we intend to go, y' know of our Governor's connivance, and, by my star, y' know too much! Were y' aught but what y' are I'd not waste time; but being a gentleman, and brother of Sir George, a fair, honorable man, I hesitate

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to give ye over to the lads outside. On the other hand, I dare not let y' go."

He drummed absently upon the table, his eyes roving about the room.

For the moment my mind flashed beyond the partition, to a figure who was, e'en now, listening at the pinhole of light. 'Twas of small value that through chance I had found him out, but from his exclamation I knew his daughter lived, not the whim of Moddiford or pirates, nor captive of the Maroons, but evidently free, and by her father's connivance in this place called Panama. Where it was, I had no idea, nor the difficulties attendant in gaining it, and here was the chance forced on me, of transportation—my life forfeit upon refusal. With difficulty I suppressed a smile that rose despite my predicament.

"Let me be of you. A gentleman does not break his word and I promise on my honor not to breathe aught of what I have unintentionally heard. My sword and services are at your disposal. Perchance four years of fighting in the Low Countries and on the Scottish border may make me of value. Captain Morgan, I would go with you."

"With a common share?"

"Aye."

"You'll keep your vow?"

"You have my given word, sir!"

"Then y' shall go with us. 'Tis the only way out for ye. Dick's guaranty of y' courage shall be a guaranty of y' promise." He arose and walked toward the door. "Wilkes, art coming with me?"

"Nay," interrupted Shattuck. "There's a wager atween us."

Morgan laughed and with a parting glance at me disappeared through the door. I heard the tramp of many feet and the jingle of metal, as his escort fell in with him and marched away.

Hereupon the lad Fox was ordered from his corner to replenish the large bowl, Shattuck scolding him the while for his deception, threatening him with atrocities till the lad scarce dared to move. His pitiful state of subjection pleased the pirate, for he grinned sheepishly and started to banter Wilkes, who finally tossed a bag of metal upon the table and said impatiently,

"There lies my wealth. Stake with the like and let's to it."

The bag was opened and the gold covetously piled in several stacks. Shattuck duplicated the amount from his own spacious pockets and turned to me pleasantly, as if I were his best friend:

"Y' re stranger no longer, Siller-Shoes. Wilt join?"

"Nay," I replied.

"We'll do two for one," said Wilkes, his eyes shining as he gazed at the wagers.

"List to Little Shrimp," mocked the pirate. "An' do ye say no, y' are a coward. Come, m' bold Siller-Shoes, draw up."

There was naught else to do in face of such retort; also Romeo's warning that he would not brook opposition flashed o'er me. As I was to be of this band of outcasts, it behooved me to stand on good terms with their leaders.

Untying my bundle, I laid the wager upon the table, which, from Romeo's requisitions and this new demand, left me scarce a groat. That bone of previous contention, the cracked cup, was thrust in my hands 'midst a sly chuckle from Shattuck, filled to the brim with obnoxious liquor, our weapons were placed in a corner and the foul game commenced.

IT IS not my purpose nor desire to describe such a scene, neither can I soften its degradation. In the fair land so far away, cups ofttimes served a safer duel than swords, and afforded varied amusements, but the participants were gentlemen and played their wager as gentlemen should, while here there was neither order nor gentility. What passed then was a change from semi-civilization to complete barbarism, wherein a man's mind was drowned in his stomach, and the latter subjected to keen torture.

'Twas not long ere I arose and lay down, more miserable than ever from steel or culverin. Gradually sight clarified and I lay on my side watching them in mute wonder at such endurance.

'Twas "Here, Fox!" "Make haste, Fox!" "Another jack, Fox!" and so on 'midst a continuous stream of banter and boasting, one to the other, till finally the Governor's man half tilted from his chair, strove in vain to regain himself, and fell headlong under the table.

Shattuck roared with merriment, pounding the bowls upon each other in his glee till they broke, the liquor dripping with a sickly smell to the floor. Then he swept the stacks of rum-soaked gold into his

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pockets, jammed his hat farther over his hideous face, and lurched into the night, singing:

"Highlee! Highlo! A Devon crew,
A Devon master, an' me an' you;
The devil alone, knows what we'd do.
Highlee! Highlo!
Highlo! Highlee!
'Tis Devon lads make history."

His voice, steady and clear, floated back until it died away in distance and I heard only the labored breathing of the sleeper 'neath the table. Then I, too, dozed, for when my eyes opened the torches were burnt out. Some one had mercifully placed a jacket 'neath my head. The moonlight coming through the window revealed the filth and degradation of Wilkes, the Governor's man—his small body tied in a drunken knot, his gorgeous velvets ruined, and his dignity, nay manhood, gone from him.

I looked away in disgust, gazing up and down the wall, wondering if man could live and suffer more internal torment than befell my lot just then. Pains, as of hot irons, seared me from head to foot, making sleep impossible; the agony becoming so great I wondered if death were near. Terror added to torment caused my brain to whirl in space, wherein a black-eyed, clear-skinned maiden, bearing a chalice, knelt by my side bidding me drink and stating my pain would forthwith vanish. Using the satin of her bare arm as a pillow, I drained the cup and in the relief which followed, babbled like a child of my torture, my duel in far away England, my quest, and the hidden anguish within at losing so suddenly all fame and hope of honorable futurity. Then she smiled and calling me "Apollo driven from Heaven," said all would yet be well and passed on and out of sight.

Transitory, fanciful, sweet vision! 'Twas over ere begun and I found myself supported by my arms to a sitting posture, shivering and staring at the play of moonbeams upon stools and table—a recumbent, loathsome little creature bathed in his vice 'neath the latter and snoring lustily—while from the table-top, like the tick of a clock, came the monotonous *drip*, *drip* of rum, each drop as it fell in the yellow light sparkling like a jewel. The full realization of my vision passing o'er me, I sank back with a groan, more of relief than regret.

Then came a rustle of wings, an angry croak at disturbance of the quiet, and a voice said:

"Devil—devil—devil!"

This at least was reality, and feeling vastly better I fell asleep.

SUNLIGHT shining through the window and full upon my face awoke me at last. Wilkes was gone, the floor swept clean, and all traces of rum and broken crockery removed from the table.

With unsteady footing and a head somewhat heavy, I went outside, over the dead scrub to the brook, where its cool water upon face and neck was refreshing. A slave was already at work nearby in a small patch of cane, singing happily, seemingly without a care save to shake each stalk and stand where he would receive the dew upon his black body.

The lad Fox came from the house with a basket on his arm, passing over the wasted fields to the highway and going toward the town along a deserted road, as yet scarce awake in the rising mist.

At the window stood Dudley watching me, disappearing the instant our eyes met. When I entered he was seated at the table intent upon the contents of a bowl which had a savory odor.

Contemplating him in silence for some minutes I marveled at his cunning in feigning madness which seemed more real upon close examination. His matted hair, ragged clothes, physical deformity, abstracted air and vacant gaze formed the setting for masterful deception, and no doubt the cleverness of his mind, made astute by the torture, completed the rôle.

As I sat opposite, I realized he must know I had seen his actions of yestereve, which were not those of a wandering mind. But he stared at me vacantly, vastly disconcerting, and my smile of friendship vanished in the uncertainty of procedure.

"Dudley," I said at last, "there's no need of this play with me. I am your friend and would talk with you on matters close to us both."

I paused, but received no sign of recognition from him save the strange smile given me before. He buried his face in the bowl as I continued.

"Last night I was in yonder room, as you well know. I saw you creep to the

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wall to listen. At mention of Panama you exclaimed for your daughter's safety. Zooks, man! I have come from England to see you. Wilt not talk to me?"

At the raising of my voice he jerked up his head and glared at me, then the same meaningless smirk stole over his features and he returned to his bowl, now empty, running a thin forefinger about its interior and sucking the moisture.

"Good!" I exclaimed, irritated. "Then I'll talk to you. See here—my brother's ring upon this finger. Look at it, I say!"

I snatched away the bowl and, pushing up his chin, thrust the bauble before his eyes.

He muttered under his breath and started to shiver, much to my wonderment.

"Dudley, you heard me tell them I was forced to flee from London. 'Twas true. You heard me say you could return. That was also true. You heard me promise to join them on this venture. I suggested it; and why?" I leaned forward and caught his soiled doublet. "Because of what I overheard you say. Because of the maid. 'Twas to keep a promise you have not kept."

I paused, but his stolid demeanor and indifference goaded me into taunting him.

"You, the hero of Naseby!" I went on. "The right arm of Joyce in spiriting our King from Holmby; the conqueror of Leslie at Dunbar! You, with your distorted Puritanical views, lost your honor to my brother. Where is the promised maid? Why did you send her to Panama rather than England? Enough! To Panama I go for her, from whence, by some means, she returns to my brother as agreed. You are not listening to papist, prelatist, or pirate! I am your friend and do you naught but favor. Wilt not speak to me?"

Still no reply, but the parrot in response to a slight sign fluttered upon the table and perched close betwixt his elbows as he leaned over the bowl.

I was angry and shook him roughly, whereat the bird gave me a vicious dig with his sharp beak upon the arm. I half drew my dagger to slit its throat, then arose impatiently.

Looking at him from the window, I was not sure but that his madness was real after all, and that what I had seen was but another side to his malady. If this were true then indeed was I lost to a band of reckless devils and had but strengthened the noose about my own neck.

His thin hand caressed the brilliant plumage of his pet soothingly, but his gaze was as vacant as the empty fields before me. With fear in my heart, I resolved to try once more.

"Doth England — Cromwell — Marley—bring naught to you?" I asked.

There was no reply.

"And your daughter Margaret—Margot, you called her. Is that also without meaning?"

Silence.

"Alas, then," I said sadly, convinced of this new and greater folly on my part, "'tis I who play the fool—not you, my poor Blunt-Nose. You deceived me, and as usual I was too hasty. Pledged to a band of vile, scum-created criminals, for naught save to lose my life in the disgrace such folly merits! I would I could find your daughter, but all hope of it has gone from me."

At this moment came a sound from the rear as of two negroes in dispute. The old man arose instantly and, keeping out of range of the window, came to my side. The look in his face, pinched and wan by suffering as it was, foretold Dudley, not Blunt-Nose, and hope revived within me.

"Listen, young hothead, and quickly, for there is some one coming," he said in a whisper, "and remember what I say, but forget who spoke. My daughter is in Panama. The lad Fox aided her, it matters not how, to Chagres castle to his father and uncle. The fortress was no place for a woman and they sent her to the family of Alvarez in Panama, where she is at present. What right have you, a poppy-cock, to talk to me of honor, of Naseby, Joyce, Dunbar and my belief in Puritanism? You who know nothing! I who know so much! My God, so much!"

He caught the parrot suddenly and dropped into the corner, snuffing his reason as quickly as it had come and staring before him with the unseeing eyes and vacant air of Blunt-Nose.

For want of better to do and with a heart beating high in exultation and hope, I drew my dagger and played with it in the sunlight, polishing on the scruff of my sleeve.

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THEN followed the sound of heavy cursing. The cries of negroes were hushed, and Shattuck came through the passage into the room, walking steady and showing no signs of his drunken carousal. He whacked me playfully on the shoulder, his broad, toughened hand feeling like a billet of wood.

"How goes it with the new brother o' the sea to-day?" he asked pleasantly.

"Poorer in pocket, and a distaste for victuals," I answered.

"Good! I thought ye might be down with distemper. Kill-devil is bad for strangers in a hot country. Most allus 'e curls up an' closes 'is book. I should 'a 'ad better thought o' ye."

I glanced at him in astonishment. A new side to the man's nature showed itself each time we met, of which I had seen so many I was sore perplexed. He looked at Blunt-Nose, squatted upon the floor at play with the parrot. Some thought displeased him for he scowled.

"Where is my little Fox?"

I shook my head.

"I know not. An hour past he went toward the town with a basket under his arm."

At this the pirate chuckled.

"Aye, 'twill need more than one for the rum we quenched. Wilkes crawled home at daybreak an' lies flat on 'is back. Yo-ho! 'Tis a fine Little Shrimp we 'ave. An' ye, ere the first heel-taps, down y' went," he paused reflectively. "Methinks that's why y' are alive to-day. A clever lad an' done it o' purpose. As for me," he patted his tremendous chest. "As for me," he repeated, "I 'ad but begun."

"You are a heavy drinker," I answered, for want of something to say.

"Let be, matey. I leaves that to ye. I do say, however, there's but one man in the plantation what can out-drink me, an' that's Morgan. Up with ye, Siller-Shoes, an' we'll be going."

"Going! Where?"

He pounded me playfully upon the shoulder again.

"Hath forgot the good service done ye last night an' the promise y' made? To the town y' go, siller shoes an' all, where y' takes oath to the merry men. Then for Port Royal an', doth the wind blow fair on the morrow, away we go." He caught my arm, pulling me toward the door and turning as he did so. "Aye, Blunt-Nose. Take care o' my little Fox, an'—well, else more o' the torment for y' sour soul. Farewell, purty Poll," he stopped to look at the bird. "Y' ol' owl!" he said fiercely, making a false start whereat the parrot flew to his perch of the night previous upon the wall-top.

Again he laughed and then we passed into the warm sunlight, leaving a parrot screaming: "Devil—devil—devil!" and an old withered thing, once a man, gazing after us through the open door, with the fanciful stare of witchery and madness.

CHAPTER IX

THE ASSAULT ON ST. CATHERINE

ONE day later, while busy in Morgan's cabin upon rough sheets of the ship muster-book, recording guns, stores and powder and involved among lists of wooden dishes, candles and lanthorns for the hold, the order came to weigh anchor; thereat I went on deck.

Lengthening shadows along the shore brought into strong relief eight vessels which were to accompany us to the rendezvous—four galliasses, two dromonds and two galleys. And our own—a fine Spanish galleon of twenty-two great guns and six small brasses, captured by Morgan a few months previous near Cartagena. Like all others of its kind, the poop was raised high, chamber upon chamber, the bulwarks were four feet thick, and the three decks triple planked.

Directly the anchor had been catted and fished and the sails trimmed to the breeze, to add to the further humiliation of this proud Spanish war-dog, old "Galley Joe," the boatswain, hauled to the peak the colors of my country—a George's cross of scarlet upon a ground of white.

Not until the ocean encompassed us upon its broad bosom and the blue Jamaica land was fast fading from sight beyond our stern-post, did the noise cease and the decks present any united scene of action.

Morgan and several of his officers were grouped on the poop in idleness, while Shattuck, naked to the waist and steaming with perspiration, finding his ship true on her course and the sails drawing, ceased bawling orders and sat down upon a keg,

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the picture of savage contentment. Everywhere swarmed a horde of men, unclean and and nigh unclothed, swaggering, singing and boasting, their hats askew, their faces as eager as they were villainous, and their fraternity as repulsive as their lack of decorum.

It is the custom of buccaneers upon setting forth to assemble round the mainmast, where all questions are debated, and pick each his comrade for the venture. When the two are thus mated there is an invisible bond between them which naught save death can destroy. This procedure now took place, and to my joy Romeo dragged me into the group and we crossed our hands on the tapering spar. For some time these silent vows of brotherhood took place; marvelously orderly, and with a tinge of seriousness commendable. Then in the fast-gathering darkness Romeo mounted a barrel. Three companions clustered about him with small, pronged instruments over which thin skins had been drawn. Aided by discords from his musicians, Romeo sang several songs, one of which had a number of repetitions:

"Hard a-lee, over the sea!
Yo-ho! m' lads, yo ho!
Death to the Dons where'er they be.
Yo-ho! m' lads, yo-ho!
Away with Catholic majesty!
Yo-ho! m' lads, yo-ho!

"Heave-ho, away we go!
At 'em—slash 'em—lay 'em low!
Let the blade sing 'em to sleep;
Off with the head—off with the feet—
Down——
Down——
Down——
Five an' forty fathoms deep."

Shades of the immortals! Æschylus, Homer, Dante—yea, even Shakespeare—arise in your wrath and smite this poetaster, this death-dealing rimester of loose imagination!

But to the assembly he gave voice in expressive (forgive the word) language to the common thought and feeling and was wildly cheered, so I wandered as far away as possible and sat down against the bulwark.

Here that evil outcast of my brother's household, thief and bully combined, found me just as the gray gloom lapsed into night. His step was akin to the fox in a strange rickyard, his bearing that of a coward, and his voice the hiss of a serpent as it sounded in my ear.

"I had thought to double with ye, Roddy, m' boy. 'Tis not too late an' y' be o' m' mind."

"My pledge hath been given," I replied.

"The lad yonder belongs to Red."

"The lad yonder belongs to me," I said sharply.

He hesitated.

"How came ye by him?"

"I bought him."

"Ho, ho! Then 'twas ye what handed 'honest' Fred Chace the welt in his jaw!" He lowered his voice. "Red is wild on't. Best double with me, Roddy."

"Go your way, Straight-Eye. My choice is made," I answered, ignoring the note of thinly veiled warning in his voice.

"Red is wondrous with the blade. E'en Shattuck takes care not to come to handy-strokes. An' y' cling to the ne'er-do-well, 'twill be good-night to ye, Roddy."

"You threaten me?"

He backed off a few steps.

"Y' may take it as y' choose. I've said my say."

"As brother to Sir George, I've not yet said mine; nor when I do will the answer come from an empty mouth."

"Then y'll not double?"

"No, sirrah!"

He bowed mockingly.

"I wish ye good-e'en an' good future, Roddy," he said, then turned and left me in peace.

This conversation made serious trouble for me later, but the result was of greater import to Straight-Eye than myself.

Latter, when the stars twinkled and the breeze swept our decks, Romeo sat by my side and divided a huge piece of salted meat. He ignored my chaffing of his songs, and with a mouth full of meat commenced an endless doggerel from Shakespeare, dealing of love and languishing ladies, and what else I know not. I was watching two men nearby, Straight-Eye and Red Dick, who were in earnest conversation concerning us, for they looked often our way. There seemed to be trouble brewing, but Romeo laughed at me, saying:

"Y' scent fight in whate'er y' see."

"Tis not beyond reason."

"Nay, who would dare fight with Apollo?"

I looked at him quickly.

"Apollo?" I repeated. "Wherefore?"

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He laughed again and lay back upon the deck, clasping his hands behind his head.

"How should I know?" he said mysteriously. "Are y' not the model of manly beauty who was, a day or two past, in search of a maid? It may be y' are still seeking. Perchance, when found she will love the brave Silver-Shoes." He stopped at my exclamation and turned toward me grinning. "'Apollo's angry and the heavens themselves do strike at my injustice,'" he quoted waggishly, but I made no reply.

SOON our small fleet arrived at Port Couillon, near the island De la Vaca. Here we found a large number of strangely assorted craft in wait who hailed us noisily.

Shortly after anchorage the conference of Morgan and his captains, in the former's large cabin, took place. Articles of agreement were signed by all, each captain receiving a royal commission, signed and sealed by Governor Moddiford, to plunder and destroy Spanish life and property wherever found.

The articles of agreement set forth due recompense for the wounded; loss of legs, arms, eyes, and so on being rewarded by certain sums of gold or its equivalent in slaves. The first man in action who hauled down the Spanish colors received fifty pieces of eight. Surgeons drew two hundred pieces of eight for their chests of medicaments; carpenters, one-half that sum. One one-hundredth part of all plunder belonged to Captain Morgan.

These questions were to the pirates what home and honor are to the Englishman, and therefore were agreed upon first of all. Then came the discussion: Attacking what point would return the greatest amount of gold?

From the waist, where many of us were huddled in rare quietness listening to voices wafted through the cabin windows, we heard the merits of La Vera Cruz, a shipping port of the gold from Manila; and of Cartagena, headquarters of the Spanish church, and which was, in consequence, rich in gold and slaves.

For a time dispute waxed high between these cities, and when it seemed the argument would end in a general fight, Morgan gained the floor.

He dwelt upon the vast force, greater than any gathering of buccaneers heretofore known, and for the first time sanctioned by the Governor of Jamaica; the need of unity, and the effacement of personal opinion by rule of majority. Cartagena and La Vera Cruz were rich and worth plundering, but with the great force both would scarce reap a spoil sufficient for all. Would it not be best to strike at the heart of Spanish dominion—that pearl of the Andes situate on the Southern Sea whose streets were paved with gold, and where, each day of the year, mule trains from Peruvian mines deposited sacks of the yellow in the king's storehouses?

Panama then was the conquest where every man could gather enough of the metal to make him rich for life. The way was difficult, but the end justified hardship. He would lead them and he never failed.

A greater part of their travel inland could be made by boat up the Chagres River, and did they keep their intention secret, Panama would be an easy conquest through surprise. And now was the opportune time, for the king's storehouses were groaning with the year's burden, which would not be convoyed down the Chagres to Puerto Bello until the Plate fleet arrived—an event yet some months away.

Decision for this step was as sudden as their hush at its mention. The island of St. Catherine, a Spanish prison post, was first to be recaptured. There they hoped to find criminals from Panama who would be bribed or forced to serve as guides.

After much feasting and toasting, the conference broke up, and I stretched my cramped limbs in a short walk about the deck.

On the forecastle Shattuck joined me by the rail where we watched the many lights from our colony of ships, the dancing boats returning with their captains from the gathering, and brush fires on shore with the dark forms of many men playing about them.

"No need for silence longer, Siller-Shoes," he said cheerily, "an' y' can mouth Panama till the day o' doom. 'Tis a fine fleet we 'ave. What say ye?"

"Fine from point of variety—aye, superfine."

"Grant y' that, but with the difference in ships will come divers ways o' fight, vastly perplexing to yellow dogs. Think on 't. Two score o' craft an' two thousand brave boys. Think o' our hundred whole cannon, an' the purty culverins, an' sweet sakers;

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an' the wee ones—falconets, rabinets, bases, an', Lord, a hundred others! Think o' the kiss o' all the darlings t' onct, m' fire-eating Siller-Shoes." He clapped me on the back. "Strike me dead! I sez we can plug a path through 'em what will never be forgot. Aye, we should sail for Spain itself. An' hark ye, matey. There'll be some rare fun at Chagres, with plenty o' rum an' gold to boot. Lord! Lord! How I itch to start the purty game!"

His voice was eager, his manner excited, and talk of fight seemed the theme nearest his heart.

WE LAY here at anchor several days, cleaning ship and making repairs. Three or four large parties visited the mainland in search of provisions, returning with a huge quantity of wild beasts which were well salted, also several goodly pinnaces laden with corn and maize.

This plunder made us depart in haste, for the country about was aroused and so situated that a strong force could quickly arrive from Cartagena or Santa Maria.

So we set sail for St. Catherine, the home of Spanish convict labor, and, with smooth seas and fair winds, anchored ere dawn four days later in a bay called Aguada Grandè. Here we waited the second squadron, under command of "Lollie" Hatton, whose cruelty and excess were tempered by his rank of Vice-Admiral. At sunrise he appeared on the horizon with his ships, later anchoring near us.

St. Catherine had previously been taken by the notorious pirate Mansvelt, under whom Morgan received his first real instruction in the art of buccaneering. A Frenchman, Le Sieur Simon, was left in charge, with a garrison of one hundred men, Mansvelt intending to make the island his base of operations against the Spanish. Le Sieur Simon placed the larger of the two islands in good condition for defense and cultivated the smaller to the extent he could re-victual the pirate fleet on its return.

Meanwhile fate intervened and Mansvelt died. The Spaniards, mustering a large force, re-took the islands, putting Le Sieur Simon to death. A number were transported to Puerto Bello, from whence they escaped in a large dugout and were now with us.

These men gave valuable advice, and at dusk, screened by murky vapor rolling in from the sea and portending rain, Morgan landed half our force at selected points, whence we marched through the woods with small resistance until we reached the bridge connecting the islands.

Here a rapid fire checked our advance and forced us to spend the night in an open field. Hunger was not the sole drawback, for at midnight rain fell, soaking us to the bone. At daybreak the sun dried our drenched bodies and firearms, and the advance was continued.

Soon the sun disappeared and rain commenced again, this time a second deluge, sheets of water so thick that only at intervals could I distinguish Romeo by my side. He seemed indifferent to hunger and wet, and in his cotton doublet and bedraggled nethers, pistol in one hand and over-sized sword in the other, sang till the growling men about, being in no mood for hilarity, bade him cease. Then he commenced his endless doggerel, amusing in that his envious "moon, stars and soft-scented night," were frequently banished to clear a mouth of rain-water.

Perceiving the discontent spreading, Morgan made a bold, characteristic move by demanding surrender of the island and its garrison within the hour, else he would give no quarter.

The Spanish governor was brave, but better noted for discipline than actual warfare, and thinking of his inferior force, composed mostly of criminals, decided to surrender and save his neck. He made agreement with Morgan that, to keep his honor, the latter should secretly land a force at night to attack the fort of St. Jerome; that his fleet direct a furious fire upon the castle of Santa Teresa; and that a third force should land near the battery of St. Matthew, at which point he could be taken in his attempt to pass from fortress to battery.

Night came, dark, stormy, as we took our positions and soon commenced a sham battle in which much powder was burnt, the Governor captured, toasting Morgan upon his victory from a small silver flask of Canary wine; and the fortress and castle gates opened.

Once within, and the garrison relieved of their arms and placed in a monastery under guard, the pirates threw down their weapons and waged real warfare upon pigs, poultry

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and beef. Somewhat rudely but none the less satisfactorily, we killed, dried and roasted the fresh meat over fires, pulling down the wooden huts for fuel, the raw, half-cooked meal tasting like a king's banquet.

CHAPTER X

SHATTUCK TAKES A PRISONER

THE next day the prisoners were lined along the castle wall—four hundred and sixty in all; men, women, children, slaves and banditti. They were stripped of their jewels and valuables, the men and slaves confined in one monastery, the women and children in another, and the banditti set free. Upwards of thirty thousand pounds of powder were transferred to the ships.

Later Shattuck came to me as I was dividing a sweet morsel of fowl with Romeo, as we sat on the monastery steps guarding the women and children.

"Siller-Shoes, y' are a man o'cleverness. Let us see y' pick three dogs o' Panama from that litter." He pointed to a group of banditti standing near the ruins of a hut.

"Five more he doth not," and Morgan himself came from behind and stood by my side.

"Five more it be, Captain," replied Shattuck, while Romeo plucked me by the arm, making pretense to arrange my sword, and whispered,

"The three nearest the door. I spoke with them a short time past."

I stepped over to the group and bade the three mentioned to present themselves before our Captain. They obeyed with some trepidation.

Morgan seemed amazed at finding I was correct, and scowling, tossed a small bag, tied with silk and heavily weighted, to Shattuck, who seemed as surprised as the other, but vastly more delighted.

Our leader beckoned to me and I stood beside the three criminals, the one nearest me visibly quaking with fear of impending torture.

"What deviltry hath thou practised upon me?" he queried somewhat tartly, for he was a hard loser.

"Naught, save discernment of human nature," I answered.

"Well, Silver-Shoes, for that is your name methinks, your luck renders me poorer to the one lad who always wins, either by deviltry [here Shattuck chuckled] or by luck. I shall keep eye on you." He called to several buccaneers, who paused some distance away to stare at him, and turned to the banditti. "Come with me," he said harshly. "I would talk with you."

We watched them around the corner, then Shattuck looked at Romeo grimly.

"An' if I was Morgan I would slit y' throat for the scurvy trick. But I'm the winner an' naught will be said. The two o' ye make a clever pair, aye, much too clever! Have a care."

He turned toward me as if he would add something, then changed his mind and left us.

Romeo's jaw, which was partly extended in surprise, now closed with a snap.

"Faith, Silver-Shoes, he hath four eyes! Oh, he is wondrous, the cleverest man on the Main. I tell you 'tis he who leads us, and Morgan follows with the rest. And when I plot 'gainst such a man, well—I'll want the golden key that opes the palace of eternity far more than now."

Saying which, he spread his book upon his knees and was lost to the world.

As for me, I sat patiently on the steps, sword in hand, idly pricking chicken-bones within reach, and listening uneasily to cries and groans from the frightened folk within the monastery. 'Twas something new for me to be a guardian of women, and, while a soldier shirks no duty, however irksome, yet such a name was denied me, and to escape guardianship of the danger I secretly feared most, I would gladly have relinquished my post to any one who sought it.

The three banditti were relieved to find that all the dreaded buccaneer desired was their services in crossing the Isthmus. They gladly consented, especially when promised equal shares of plunder from those on the way, and a safe conduct to Jamaica when the army returned.

AFTER four days spent in eating, drinking and gambling, several ships and a boat, commanded by "Moss" Kingsbury and Shattuck, were sent to take Chagres Castle, situated at the mouth of Chagres River. Morgan remained behind at St. Catherine, lest the Governor of Panama suspect his ultimate designs.

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Romeo and I accompanied Shattuck and "Moss" Kingsbury. The latter was a grizzled old buccaneer, brave as a lion, careless of speech and manner, and of villainous temper. Shattuck spent half his time in tormenting him. They came to blows frequently, once, while locked together, falling in a large tub of water upon the forecastle. At another time "Moss" was roped and dragged at the stern for an hour, his head alone above water. But their baiting was never serious, and despite such pranks they remained good friends.

Three days later we arrived at the river's mouth, but as the castle guns sent solid shot whistling about our ears, 'twas most unpleasant, therefore we made a detour and anchored a league away in a small bay, sleeping on deck under a tropical moon, ready for an early call on the morrow.

The castle of San Lorenzo, grim guardian of the river's mouth, was built on the crest of a high hill of great percipitousness.

At dawn, just as the highly colored lights out-tinted darkness and the gray, fever-laden mist commenced to rise slowly in smoke-rolls from the sea, we were aroused by the boatswain's whistle, given a mess of meat and parched corn to eat, and with maize and charqui packed in small bundles upon our backs for the march, rowed ashore.

A clear sky gave evidence of fair weather, and we set off inland ere the sun had risen, the three banditti of Panama guiding; directly in their steps followed several pirates ready to cut them down the instant they played false.

Our way was difficult, leading through mangrove swamps, the treacherous, rotted grasses giving a wrong impression of firm footing, and often I sank nigh waist deep. Decayed trees and stumps gnarled with prickles barred progress; the hiss and startling glide of large venomous reptiles, one whose girth was the size of my helmet; the deep-throated bark of huge, scaly animals with long dangerous tails and prodigious mouths opening like a pair of shears and capable of gulping a man whole; little devils of flys that sang and beat about our ears, nibbling of us and leaving a most uncomfortable feeling, which, because of constant repetition, became vastly aggravating; and over all the hot sun burned down through the trees, making the decayed verdure steam with such odiousness as to bring fear of fever to all.

Finally at two o'clock past midday we emerged from a thicket of liane and green cane upon an open plain, where, in our front and not far above us, towered the castle. Yells from its defenders floated down to us, and shortly they commenced firing. Our drooping spirits from the tedious march were instantly revived, and leaving a company of musketeers in reserve amidst the cane, we lighted our fire-balls and rushed into a gully toward the castle, blinded by livid sheets of gunfire and badly bruised by the hail of shot.

"Come on, ye English dogs; enemies to God and our King!" they cried. "And let your other companions come, too, for ye shall not get to Panama this bout!"

Shattuck was well in advance of the rest, and I chanced to be nearest him, when, upon hearing these taunts, he slowed down to a walk and turned a face, crimson with surprise and hatred, toward me.

"They know, Siller-Shoes! Strike me dead! The yellow devils! They know it all!" He started running, waving his sword. "Won't we! Yo, ho! Yo, ho! Y' ll not be there to see us!"

Down we raced through the gully and up the slope to the wooden palings. They were too high and too strong either to scale or break through, and, subjected to a galling cross-fire, we turned and fled faster than we came, pausing only when within shelter of liane and green cane. This disastrous charge had cost us fourscore men.

Naught could be done till nightfall and, somewhat spent from our exertions in heat of midday, we lay down to rest. Darkness therefore was hailed joyfully by all not too seriously wounded to return to the assault.

CRAWLING close to the ground, we made way again into the gully and up the steep slope, night rendering Spanish aim, never very accurate, still more uncertain, so that this time we reached the palings without losing a man.

I heard a deep groan and a curse from the dark form by my side, who had run across the gully in a crouching posture, his body bent to attain greater speed. 'Twas Shattuck with an arrow through his back, so driven its point projected from his side.

He hesitated a moment, wincing from pain, then wrenched the arrow away, wrapped its shaft with cloth, rammed it

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into a musket, and fired over the paling. The cotton catching fire from the discharge, ignited the thatched roof of a hut, where the arrow chanced to alight, and at first escaping notice, flames spread quickly to several other huts, finally reaching the powder-kegs. These blew up with a great explosion, sending sticks and stones about the Spaniards and causing a general conflagration which necessitated the entire efforts of the defenders to subduc.

Meanwhile, by aid of fireballs, the palisade caught fire, soon creating a breach through which we rushed. The castle walls and palm-thatched huts were now a mass of flames lighting the interior with the hot, yellow glare of noonday. By this aid our best marksmen commenced picking off their gunners.

Thus day dawned as the fire burnt itself out, exposing the Spaniards standing manfully by their guns, now without protection, but pouring so continuous a fire we dared not charge.

At midday, however, a greater part of their gunners had been killed, and, headed by Shattuck and Moss Kingsbury, we rushed upon them. Moss went down at the first onset, and for a moment I thought Shattuck had gone also, but there he stood alone, surrounded by Spanish foes and maintaining himself in the savage sweep of his sword. Romeo and myself, with four or five others, ran to his rescue.

Slowly we drove them into the inner castle, where they made a stubborn stand in one large group, headed by the Governor's tall figure, their backs to the wall and their defense studied and impregnable. A horde of our crew were at them, our numbers being augmented each minute by others, and as this smacked of butchery, I stepped back, grounded my point, and wiped the sweat and powder-stains from my face.

The slow rolling desert was a broad waste of solitude and calm as far as the eye could reach, the surf curling softly in a small, white ribbon upon the shore far below.

But the smell of burnt wood; cries and groans of the wounded and dying; the face of a fleeting soul at my feet, splotched with the red and slowly turning waxen in its momentary departure; the mêlée of men yonder, screaming, cursing; steel glinting and sparks flying; the sight of prostrate forms about me, in some instances piled high like faggots; and the kneeling figure of Shattuck several yards away, busied with his flesh wound; all swept aside pastoral pictures, of sunlight, sea and sky.

And as I watched, he straightened up, gripped his sword, and turning with a loud yell, dashed into the fight. He swept aside a half-dozen of his men, brought his sword in a high curve down upon the row of pikes, and ere they could be raised had wedged his way within the line.

Suddenly the Spanish front wavered, then broke, and all save the Governor fled, some thirty of which, who had not the courage to jump over the parapet into the sea, surrendering, the rest perishing from the high leap. To the ill-fated Governor 'twas the thing most desired, yet Shattuck would not have it so.

He broke the concerted attack upon the lone figure and hurled a heavy stone in his face. Ere the wretched man could recover he was forced to his knees, roped, and thrown near a dismantled cannon. Shattuck sat perched upon the useless gun, glaring down upon his prisoner, oblivious to the noise and confusion about and seemingly fascinated by his capture.

Thus fell Chagres Castle, and beyond, far below and winding in and out till the distant hills hid it from view, lay the river, a sparkling highway to Panama, now open to Morgan and his band, and from the sea, defenseless.

CHAPTER XI

A SPANIARD ESCAPES

NO CONQUEROR of the Ages, however rapacious, ever equaled in greed or avariciousness these South Sea pirates. Oblivious to the piles of dead and wounded, they broke formation and rushed to and fro in search for spoil, screaming with delight at each new find.

From curiosity I followed a large party through spacious castle halls desecrated from their dignity of velvets, tapestries and rich paintings by the shrieking horde, the chair of state in the Council Chamber being torn from its panoply and shorn of its wondrous vesture. Tumbling, laughing, shouting, they trooped down the wide stairway underground, passing dungeons infested with vermin, in which daylight never

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penetrates, and I pitied the poor unfortunates therein, of whose crimes we knew naught, and who came eagerly to the bars in hopes of liberation. Their spirits were dashed and sufferings increased by the cruel thrust of lighted torches in their faces.

At the end of a long and winding corridor where openings in the rock allowed rays of the setting sun to filter through, the freebooters came upon wine-cellars, wherein many remained. The rest, like myself, consumed more with curiosity of exploration than desire for Spanish liquors, descended a second flight of broad stairs, hewn in the same marvelous fashion from solid rock, to a lower corridor piled high with bales of merchandise.

At a stand of Spanish pikes and pistols three of us paused for a closer inspection, in the doing of which, what seemed to be the eye of an animal peered out at me. I thrust in a hand. Instantly the pile toppled forward, tumbling us upon the floor.

Haply escaping the press of sharp pikes, I arose and seized the torch ere it flickered out. By its light a man was running back through the corridor whence we came. With torch in one hand and sword in the other I raced after him.

So suddenly had this happened that my companions were left in darkness ere they regained their footing, but I heeded not their cries for help.

At the next turn, coming into the light of the sea window, I caught a glimpse of the fugitive, who turned at that moment and disappeared. I had noticed the place upon entrance; 'twas a blind annex extending from the main passage along the sea side, containing many windows and ending in blank wall. Into this passage I advanced cautiously, dropping the torch and with sword ready, for he was caught like a rat in a trap.

So softly did I creep about the turn that he failed to hear as he stood by a window, having tied a long rope to one of its bars and vainly attempting with both hands to wrench a lower one away.

As I crept upon him he succeeded, the sudden release of power throwing him back into my arms. For a moment he made a futile struggle, during which my sword dropped to the floor and I gained possession of his blade, tossing it through the window. Against the wall and slowly choking by my grip on his throat, he submitted, whereupon I stepped back between him and the main corridor, one foot on my sword.

"Mother of God!" he gasped.

"Drop the bar," I said sharply.

He hesitated, but obeyed at sight of my dagger.

"Dog, pirate, miserable unbeliever, coward—finish it! I am ready."

He straightened up with an air of pride and eyed me defiantly.

He was a man of years with the bearing and dress of a gentleman, albeit his face was covered with grime and his clothes stained and torn. Here was so great a contrast to my associates, that, Spaniard though he was, I would rather fight for him.

"You speak truth in part," I answered, "and 'tis my just deserts. As to the rest, let be. Can you escape by the rope?"

My tone was courteous and must have wofully beaten down his guard, for a tear trickled, but he made no answer, and 'twas a single drop that fell.

I waved a hand toward the opening.

"Proceed, Spaniard. Escape if you can; I'll not prevent. And be pleased to thank an Englishman for your life."

He hesitated.

"Make haste," I warned. "They may come about yonder bend at any moment. Then you are indeed lost."

He looked at me dazed.

"I may go?" he said incredulously.

"Faith, just that," I answered dryly. "And hasten, else you go another way; one not of your liking."

He clasped my hand tightly.

"A thousand pardons, Señor Englishman, and a thousand thanks! My name is Don Pedro de Luna. Remember it, I pray you. There may come a time when I can repay."

"De Luna! Surely I have heard that name before. Ah, a youth—prisoner at Spanish Town!"

"My son," said he quietly.

"Hark! 'Tis a piece of good fortune we are met. Listen, Don Pedro de Luna. Your son, known as the lad Fox, sent a maid to you; you sent her to Panama. I bear your son's interest in her welfare. Wilt go from hence to this Panama?"

"Such is my intention, señor."

"Carry to her then the word that your son is still active in her behalf. If we take the city, I will see she comes to no harm. 'Twill reassure her. As sign of my good faith I bear this ring of beaten gold with its stone

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of crimson. Tell her of it. You'll do this?"

"Willingly, señor."

Ere I could speak again there came a loud tumult from the corridor and I pushed him silently clear of the window. He slid rapidly down the sea wall, his figure growing fainter and more indistinct in the gathering darkness, while the voices and shouts came dangerously near.

Just as their torchlight shimmered about the walls the rope slackened. I severed it thankfully, and stood gazing without into the gray and mystery of that one minute 'twixt sunset and night in this strange southern land.

AND then they swept about the bend a dozen of them, hideous, savage and eager, their armor rattling and swords flashing, tearing me away from the borders of decency and into the dregs of my degradation once more.

"Where is 'e, Siller-Shoes? Where is 'e?" they shouted.

I pointed out into the night.

"Did y' kill 'im?"

I shook my head.

"Did 'e jump?"

I nodded.

Thereat they howled with delight like so many strange cats in close communion of friendship and love. One of them looked at me leeringly. 'Twas Red Dick, Romeo's would-be purchaser, now sotted with wine-bibbing.

"Fwash awry, Siller-Shoes? Have y' no mouth?"

He swayed to and fro, looking at me with half-closed eyes which were full of evil, despite his maudlin condition.

"Siller-Shoes hath no mouth!" he screamed, turning to his mates, one of whom growled at him to hold his tongue.

"He hath no mouth," he repeated, pulling out a dagger. "Let's make one for 'im!"

I took a step toward this creature in sudden anger.

"You drunken fool! I'll show you how to talk to me!" I said, bending down to clasp the sword from the stones.

There came a half-hush over the group and several pushed him from sight in their midst, murmuring under their breath and looking at me savagely, yet gradually backing away as if in fear of what I might do. In explanation of this, 'tis but fair to say the overdrawn account of my prowess during the sea fight aboard the *Andalusia* by several of the bond-servants now with us had of late been carried about the camp-fires.

My strange aloofness, which otherwise would have given me numerous quarrels, was therefore passed over and partly forgiven. Also Romeo, during his dicing and singing among them, had fostered such yarns with fancies of his own told from goodness of heart, and in honor of his little shrine of me.

Be that as it may, the disappearing torchlight made me follow, as far as possible in the rear, lest I be left in darkness.

Up the stairs we went to the corridor above. They paused at the wine-cellar and would have entered, but angry shouts from within—and I recognized Shattuck's voice—made them continue their way, a disgruntled and angry lot.

Somewhat curious, I crept near the wall and peered through the doorway. From the many casks about, Shattuck had rolled two upon the floor, on which he had placed a board, serving as a rough table and supporting a brace of candles which flickered dismally and with even worse odor.

BEYOND, upon the stones, his haggard face painted ghastly in the wavy light, sat his prisoner, cross-legged, with arms tightly bound behind him. His armor had been removed, and his rich velvets were stained and torn from rough contact with the floor. The huge stone had severely wounded his cheek and loss of the red made him weak, for only through effort did he sit up. His attitude was one of deep dejection and his eyes showed intense suffering. A sad commentary on his former high estate was this, his present one.

Shattuck occupied a stool, his back to me, one hand pressed upon his wound, the other shaking a goblet in rage at his prisoner, from which the rich wine was slowly spilling.

"Aye, y' prince o' the plank—y' miserable son o' the yellow rag, I've got ye—got ye at last! Naught will save ye now. Y' day is done. Strike me dead, 'twill be done well, y' foul bird! Y' ll ruin no more nests, and that y' may lay to!"

He choked with anger and cleared his throat with the goblet, which he unsteadily refilled from a nearby urn.

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"Kill me, pirate, for love of holy Mother, kill me and have done!" moaned the prisoner.

Again the buccaneer drained his cup and refilled it, his shoulders shaking, either through passion or the joy of torture and cruelty.

"Right y'be, an' kill's the word, but summat slow an' lingerin'-like, sweet with pain," he said, clicking his forefinger upon his one tooth.

"You have the castle and all my keys. What gold there is lies in the casket in my bed-chamber. We had no jewels; this is a fortress, not a palace. Torture can reveal nothing more, I swear it on my hope of heaven. End it, pirate, end it!"

Once again Shattuck drained his cup, holding it off at arm's length and making careful examination of its delicate tracery.

"I ha' thought for years just what to do an' 'twas hard to decide," he said musingly. "An' I sez: 'Wait, wait; when the time comes, an' y' 'ave 'im face to face, as y' be now, then 'twill come an' y' ll know what's best.'" He paused to fill his cup. "Strike me dead," he roared, smacking his lips, "'tis the time, an' I know not after all!"

The Spaniard looked at him wonderingly.

"You have thought for years what to do to me? Pirate, you are mad or drunk or both. I have never seen you before, for which God be thanked."

Shattuck half-rose from his stool and, uttering a monstrous oath, flung the goblet at his prisoner, with poor aim, for the golden cup sailed heavily into a keg along the wall, with so great a force it splintered the wood, and like a dying soldier, its red heart commenced dripping upon the stones.

"A stranger!" he roared. "Strike me dead! A stranger, be I? Yo, ho! Then y' hast forgot, an' I'll sweeten y' evil mind! Look at me well. See this scar, an' this one? An' these?"

He tore his blouse aside, the pain from his wound making him wince, for he paused long enough to place the urn to his mouth. Then smacking his lips, and with a growl, he continued,

"Y' see 'em all save the deep ones. They be inside where y' can not see, but y' shall feel 'em! Aye, all o' 'em. Dost remember the galley *Pindoro?*"

The Spaniard raised his eyes.

"*Si.* I was in command, eight or nine years past."

"An' 'ow y' ran the long plank, 'sister o' Satan,' in, and a-lashin' the poor devils to see 'em squirm? Remember who was held o'er the forrard gun by 'Injy' while y' flicked 'im 'till y' could no more?"

The Governor straightened up with an effort, his quivering lips curling with scorn.

"You were of the oars," he said haughtily, "and were flogged, which, no doubt, you well deserved. This, then, is why you will torture me."

"No!" shouted Shattuck, knotting his hands. "I was at an oar, right eno', but through bribery an' only to get ye, which I could not do. Then y' came to this new land. So did I. The 'Brotherhood' gave best chance, ye murderer o' women! Remember the little cottage in the Pyrenees —the fallen Marquis de Bajadoz—the wee babe, as sweet as y' own soul be sour? Remember 'em?"

Despite his suffering, the Spaniard seemed surprised. He regarded his tormentor gravely.

"*Si.* Marquis de Bajadoz wrote me for protection. When we reached his side I found him dead."

"Dead! Aye, y' did so, but with a *Spanish* dagger in 'is heart!"

"That had naught to do with me."

Shattuck roared with laughter.

"Y' are quick to deny, m' bold cock. An' I tells ye I know who done it. The hilt 'ad a crest. 'Twas y' own! His treasure-chest was empty. Y' murdered 'im for 'is gold!"

The Governor seemed disturbed. He glanced uneasily at his tormentor.

"This, then, is why you will torture me?" he said at last.

"It hath something to do," retorted Shattuck, drinking from the urn. "But 'tis not the reason why I ha' followed ye across seas."

He paused, his hand dropping to his side, where it spread and curled with venomous hate.

"From the little cottage y' took the babe an' its nurse. Ah! there was a woman. Beautiful, aye, a pearl beyond price! Her skin pink, like the babe she tended; her hair gold, brighter than any yellow y' foul 'ands e'er touched. An' on the way she caught y' fancy, blind though she be. But y' sweet mouthings were as empty as y' soul was clogged with sin, an' she knew it.

"On the night afore y' reached Barcelona, a lone man, crazed with hate an' murder in

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his 'eart, attacked y' camp. Six o' y' men were killed, an' he got clear with the babe. But 'twas the woman he wanted.

"For three days the little woman was kept prisoner within y' castle; for three days y' was kind an' smooth, granting every wish save one to the eyes what saw not—yet could y' fool the soul? No, y' yellow devil, 'twas beyond ye!" The pirate laughed, but his prisoner shivered at the sound. "An' for three days a lone man hovered near; watching an' waiting." He paused to drink from the urn. "On the fourth day y' went to her again, this time with a sword by y' side an' lust in y' rotted 'eart. She was there, aye, the poor birdling could not get away, but with 'er y' found one who 'ad the right, an' whom y' did not expect to see—'er husband! There was a fight, a merry fight, while the whole castle was there! An' the little woman——" He broke off abruptly, swinging to and fro and growling under his breath—"Y' killed 'er!" he cried suddenly.

The prisoner's pale face had grown even more deathly during the raving of his captor, and at the sudden finish his head drooped and his body quivered with fear.

"No, no," he mumbled.

"I say, yes, for I was the man an' saw it done!" shouted Shattuck, leaning forward and pounding excitedly upon his table.

THE Spaniard raised his eyes, wherein I saw guilt in the piteous mute appeal for mercy. The next instant a benign Providence which guards and guides the way and destiny of mankind, came to his relief, for he rolled upon his side in a faint.

For some time Shattuck sat growling and drinking heavily, till finally the urn slipped through unsteady fingers to the floor, where its delicate tracing was lost amidst a profusion of liquor and broken crockery.

Shattuck staggered to his feet, finally succeeding in gathering an elusive candle in his hand, the exertion of which so maddened him that he kicked the board viciously to a corner. Then clasping the inanimate form, he dragged him through the opening, staring straight at me, yet unseeing, and passed down the corridor.

There was a strange ghastly look about his face, partly framed by a cold, cruel smile, the weird glitter of his eyes being intensified by the flare of tallow. This doubt he had previously had of his final revenge: the doubt of making it sufficiently cruel to atone in full for his victim's wrongs. 'Twas clear it was a doubt no longer. He had found the way!

CHAPTER XII

THE DUEL ON THE BEACH

NEXT morning, while it was yet dark, the thirty Spanish prisoners were set to work burying the heaps of dead beyond the piles of blackened embers, all that remained of the huts.

From the prisoners, through the torture, 'twas learned their force amounted to three hundred and fourteen, which was a matter of great surprise. We had expected to find scarce one-third that number. This was explained by Morgan's designs upon Panama being known, through a black who deserted our fleet while on the raid at Rio de la Hacha for grain ere starting for St. Catherine. He carried the news to the Governor of Cartagena, who despatched two hundred men and a large quantity of powder and provisions to the castle. He also sent warning to the Governor of Panama, who set to work at once for its defense, strengthening the fortifications and assembling a great army wherein was the flower of Spanish chivalry, also ambuscading the Chagres at divers points.

News such as this was of prime importance, and Shattuck immediately despatched it to Morgan by the swiftest pinnace we had. Then he mysteriously disappeared.

Daylight revealed the great havoc we had made in the land defenses, but the gruesome evidences of our fight had been removed, and down upon the hillside at a point where we had issued forth from the green cane, and under the watchful eyes of a dozen pirates, our prisoners were completing their huge task of burial.

Of our force, Moss Kingsbury and over a hundred had been killed, seventy more were grievously wounded, and the rest bore varying marks of pike and musket. I escaped unscathed, save a gash or two in my shoulder, and Romeo shared my good luck, a cut on his leg paining him more than its insignificance warranted.

He lay in shadow upon the parapet between two dismantled cannon, using the prone figure of a comrade for his pillow; one who, from excess in Spanish wines, would

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render like service for some time yet to come. Such was the result of rare old Canary whose virtues had been dinned in my ears by prattlers at home.

Romeo would say but little because of his wound; therefore, unable to be of assistance, I wandered over the small bridge to the river-sweep of the fortress, descending by the tortuous stone steps to a narrow strip of beach within the bend.

For a short distance the river flowed inland over marsh and dank ground, finally winding in amidst the trees and out of sight. Strange birds flew high overhead, some with brilliant, vari-colored plumage. From the shade of distant foliage came deep-throated barks of weird, scaly creatures such as I had seen on my way hither.

The sky was as blue and flawless as the fine kerchief of Spanish weave about my throat, and the sea calm, dazzling in the sun's rays, and desolate as far as the eye could reach.

Clustered about the landing were a number of *chattas*, or *chatten*, similar to our pinnaces but much smaller and of shallow draft for river work and the freightage of goods from Chagres to nearby cities on the Main.

A score of pirates were busied looting these vessels, warping them to the slip and bringing the stores of silks, velvets and other merchandise to a strip of beach, dumping the valuables carelessly among the rocks beyond the water-mark.

Each man, as he dropped his load, carefully separated the flasks of wine and trinkets of silver and gold. Several scowled on my approach, whereat I paused uncertainly and, sitting upon the last step, watching them at their work, wondered what had gone amiss.

THE answer was not long in forthcoming, for a man heavily weighted with the valuables stopped midway to the shore for a moment's converse with a Brother, and then came directly toward me. Throwing his load almost at my feet he straightened, looking at me savagely. And as he stood, a picture of Ajax defying heavenly forces, Straight-Eye joined him.

"Time hath come, Siller-Shoes, when ye an' I settle our differences."

"We have no differences, Red Dick," I said after a moment's pause.

"Did y' not thieve the lad at Port Royal?"

"Romeo went to the man who paid for him."

"He was pledged to me, an' I still have a fancy for him." He turned and grinned to several companions, all of whom were gathering by his side as they brought their loads ashore. "Ye know what happed last night at a time when I was merry with the juice. I was not conditioned to fight then. 'Tis different now," he stopped, looking me over carefully, "an' I fancy our chances are equal for ye have no wounds to my knowledge."

"Neither wounds nor wish to fight. Insults of yestereve for my part are forgot. As to Romeo, I bought and paid for him. By your own code he remains with me. There is naught else."

"Y' paid for Romeo, aye, but with the weight of steel. Then y' left a stack o' the yellow, fearing the Brothers' wrath. It salved the hurt of honest Fred Chace, but where is the yellow for me? What o' my hurt?" He paused, placing his arms akimbo and throwing his head back defiantly. "Do ye think that can be salved with a stack too? As y' paid for the lad so will I pay—with steel, an' y' are going to lie yonder among the rocks, y' bones bleaching in the sun, whilst we make merry in Panama."

"I came by Romeo honestly. There is no quarrel, and I'll not fight."

"Y' will so!" he cried, bending forward. "Here is Straight-Eye, who knows ye well. He saved y' life at Port Royal. Y' ll have naught to do with him, nor myself, nor the rest. An' why? Are we not so good as any love-lock from Lunnun? Do we not fight so well as the red doublets? Have we not the same courage of Englishmen the world over? An' have we not honor too? That o' itself is cause enough. Why do ye treat us as carrion?"

"You imagine these things."

He paid no attention to my answer.

"Y' walk with y' nose in the air, y' eyes squint, an' y' turn away whene'er a Brother comes near. Why? I asks ye that. Why? An' I knows the answer. Y' are uppish, an' think y'self too good for the Merry Men. Because o' a sea brawl y' have reputation. But Shattuck was there, which o' itself is explanation. Now, Siller-Shoes, up with ye and out with the blade!"

"I'll not fight," I repeated.

Hereat came a murmur along the line,

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and a wretched mongrel line it was, of half-breeds and savages. Several stepped forward aggressively.

Red laughed brutally and turned to his companions.

"See, mates. A coward, after all!. He hates to have his bones bleach yonder." He faced me swiftly and planted his broad toe in my side. "This is what we does to bubbles! We pricks 'em!"

The blow was light, but alas, left me no alternative, for did I now refuse satisfaction I would be branded as coward and subjected to endless scoffing and indignities. My resolution to fight no more duels vanished in air, and I arose slowly, secretly pleased that for once I was without anger.

"I'll fight anywhere, and however you choose."

"He leaves it to ye, Red," interrupted Straight-Eye eagerly, pointing to the strip of sand. "Pistols; there's the spot."

"Why pistols?" demanded Red.

"Y' remember Lucy Ann."

This seemed to please, for the group broke into a roar of merriment.

"Pistols it be. Do ye mind, Siller-Shoes?" he spoke sarcastically in a tone intended to give me the impression he was a devil with the new-fangled arm.

I gave no answer save by shrugging my shoulders, wherefore we proceeded a stone's throw down the beach to a spot unhampered by booty, where the walls of the fortress rose sheer above us hundreds of feet on one side and the blue water glistened and sparkled on the other. The pirates disported to one side among the rocks, laughing and subtly whispering of Red Dick's prowess in tones meant for me to hear.

LACKING skill in pistol fire, I disliked the arm and used it but seldom. In old England I had fought two such duels, one of which came nigh snuffing my life. I had grave doubts as to the outcome in this, and taking the weapon from Straight-Eye, looked at it curiously. Would its mate place me yonder among the rocks, as Red Dick had said, my bones to bleach in the sun while they made merry at Panama? And if so, what would hap to the maid I had come to find? Such thoughts were not pleasant, and I wished now I had chosen swords. But a new phase of folly, or rather a desire to show these creatures my superiority had made me indifferent to the choice—an indifference which would prove costly. However, I shrugged my shoulders, gripped the pistol and smiled confidently at the group of faces about me.

Hereupon Lollie Hatton arose from a pile of silks, where he had been watching us, and came forward to take charge.

He was a tall, well-built man, of dark complexion and long black locks; his love of luxury had spread a muscular form into flabby flesh devoid of strength. But his eye was bright and clear, and as is the way with corpulence, his square face was wreathed in a perpetual smile. His wit was keen, his sense of justice strong, and his ability as a leader unquestioned.

At present he was distinguished by an enormous sash, once white but now changed to a dull bronze from christenings of gore with much superstitious reverence at the end of each fight, and from which protruded a row of pistols like buttons upon a doublet.

He placed us ten paces apart, back to back, standing near-by ready to give the word and waiting unnecessarily long. During this time Red Dick had evidently been turning over in his mind the ridiculous tales concerning me, for at the signal he whipped about and fired so suddenly that had his aim been true the lead must have entered my back; by chance, however, and according to Destiny, it sung harmlessly past my ear.

I was more surprised than he and looked at him uncertainly, whereat he flung his pistol to the sand, uttered a terrible oath, and crossing his arms upon his chest, bade me end it quickly.

More because of his odious appearance than aught else I aimed carefully at his shoulder, doubtful if the pirates among the rocks were not safer, yet hopeful at the short distance I could disable his sword-arm. There was no report, and upon looking to the priming I found it empty!

SOMEWHAT indignant, I stalked over to Lollie Hatton and threw the weapon at his feet:

"An' this be your idea of fair play, you are a foul lot, all of you! The duel is ended. When I fight I fight not with *canaille!*"

The spectators heard, for they came running with daggers drawn and clustered about Lollie, who after a quick glance at Red Dick, standing apart like myself, picked up the weapon and examined it gravely.

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The air was full of threats and oaths; many grimy fingers itched to fly upon me and I looked about, measuring the distance to the wall of rock, resolving when the time came, as it would directly, to place my back against it and send a few of these wretched creatures to Death's valley before me. Then above the din I heard Lollie's voice.

"Siller-Shoes hath the right. Let be, Red, y' are not to blame. 'Tis Straight-Eye's weapon, an' he hath played false." He broke through the group. "There he goes!" he cried, pointing with the empty pistol.

We looked toward the flight of stone steps on which, a third of the way upward, was the evil one toiling toward the top.

A roar of anger broke from the group, and I was forgotten. Several sprang to the landing, tumbling over each other in their haste, while the rest gazed skyward, shouting invectives which a moment before had been hurled *sotto voce* at me.

Straight-Eye heard the noise and turned, then redoubled his speed, only to stop abruptly a moment later. Not far above him a Brother had drawn a cutlass, realizing something awry, and was crouching down, ready to wield the dreaded handy-stroke did the fleeing man essay to pass.

For a moment Straight-Eye stood undecided. He had but a knife and could not hope to pass the barrier, while below him nearer and nearer came the cry of a pack of wolves bent upon his death.

He went to the edge of the steps and tested a narrow strip of rock, wide enough to sustain his body. Then he stepped out carefully with hands above his head, hugging the wall to maintain his balance, and inch by inch edged away from the path.

The pirate above came down a few steps and stood waiting for the half-dozen scrambling toward him. Soon they joined, and for some minutes held conversation.

Then one ventured upon the ledge, followed at intervals by the others, sliding with their feet and flattening their bodies into the wall, fearless of falling and death; intent only upon an unfortunate object who had traversed some dozen yards and there was forced to halt, for the jutting went no farther.

It was an interesting and thrilling sight to us below, the actors in this drama with real scenery resembling bees rather than men, and the result never for a moment in doubt.

Slowly Straight-Eye's left arm crept down the rock to his side and the sun's rays flashed upon his long dagger. He would sell his life dearly. The wavy line moved toward him until within six or eight feet, then paused, and from the steps was passed a cutlass, shining in the sunlight, each man sliding it along the wall above his head until the next could take it. When the leader finally clasped it and started forward, Straight-Eye's figure wavered in desperate uncertainty.

With daggers he had a chance, but the cutlass left no hope and he knew it. For an instant he started toward the on-coming death, then gave a despairing cry, swung his body out from the jutting, and came hurtling through the air to a spot among the rocks not far away and mercifully screened from sight, where he lay devoid of life and form. Far up upon the cliff a line of men screamed yells of derision, duplicated by those about me.

FOR some minutes I stood motionless, aghast at the fateful scene. Then Lollie caught my arm.

"Art satisfied of our fair play, Siller-Shoes?"

"Aye," I answered dully.

The pirate turned to the group.

"Y' heard him, lads?"

They grunted in answer, strutting back and forth upon the beach like peacocks puffed with the pride of plumage, their gait swaggering, their hats cocked, ever and anon hurling invective to a thing beyond sight which neither heard nor saw.

"Y' are forgiven then," continued Lollie, drawing one of his own weapons and examining it carefully. "Take this one."

With pistol in hand I turned grimly toward Red Dick, who stood stolidly indifferent watching the others. His eyes met mine, he threw his head back, straightened his shoulders and crossed his arms over his chest. It was a magnificent display of courage, and instantly rancor disappeared. I shook my head and handed the pistol back.

"One murder's enough, and all I desire is fair play. Let him draw his blade."

This brought a delighted cry from all, Red Dick above the rest, and their leering glances were now insolent with admiration and friendship.

A number came forward and shook my hand, several slapped me upon the back, and others whispered words of encouragement

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in my ear. And but a moment before they were as eager to slay me! An unbalanced, unprincipled, unruly set of vagabonds, swirling in the scum of the current, finally to be carried upon the broad ocean and there purified into nothingness.

At this moment the freebooters who had partaken in the chase returned, eager to be in time for the next move in the game which unwillingly I had caused. A ring was formed within which Red and myself, stripped to the waist, crossed swords.

In the excitement following I forgot my companions and for a brief space my surroundings. My adversary was quick, clever, and a worthy opponent; his thrust and parry came from no school, but through a natural gift, which made them far more dangerous and harder to meet. His advance, retreat and side-stepping were amazing in dexterity, and I felt a thrill of unholy joy such as had not come over me since the receipt of my commission from York. 'Twas ever thus from infancy, and I speak sorrowfully, a fair fight brought more pleasure than aught else the world could hold, and this one bade fair to outshine all the others.

We played for every known vantage, and blocked in the doing—and then essayed each to force the other toward the sun, or water, or into the surrounding, shrieking group—into any position so one of us could pass an invincible guard of steel and reach the flesh. The ring about became one bereft of reason in wild yells and shouts of joy so penetrating that a long line of their comrades were tumbling down the steps from above, anxious to be present ere the play was over.

Red had a hurt in his sword-arm from the fight of yesterday which now opened. I centered all effort toward worrying this, several times succeeding in piercing it lightly, which caused him vast discomfort and some temper. At intervals we thrust, parried and danced as if on a bed of thorns; at others, slow and guarded, our bodies sparkling with sweat and turning red under the glare of sunshine.

Finally, exasperated into forcing matters, he gave me no chance for aught save parrying a storm of wildly assorted thrusts. Twice his blade opened my thigh, but the touch was slight, doing no damage save pricking the flesh, and now I was his master, feeling him steadily weakening and losing his caution and cunning.

Finally the opening came, and I ran him through the shoulder, his sword slipping to the sand from muscular shock. Instantly he swept it up into his left hand and darted upon me again, but now he was unskilled, and shortly I caught his blade low, sweeping it into the air out of reach, and watched it plash in the water beyond.

HE WAITED uncertainly for a moment, his fingers upon his dagger, and then seeing me ground my point, came close, still breathing heavily.

"'Twas to the death, Siller-Shoes. Y'have the right to finish—dagger 'gainst the blade!"

"Tut, tut, man! The Dons, not I, need such skill as yours. Here's to better feeling!" I replied, shouting in his ear as I clasped a hand which gripped mine warmly amidst the pandemonium raging about.

According to custom, each spectator congratulated the victor, thus giving me a badly bruised body, for their well-meant congratulations and hand-clasps were reinforced by blows. It seemed, as I toiled somewhat painfully back up the steps, stopping to marvel at the narrow width of ledge upon which a number of lives had been risked, the entire force of freebooters were spectators, so sore did I feel.

And down below upon the landing, *chattas*, and beach, the freebooters were once again busy with their work, unmindful of the one who would work no more—thief, liar, and moral pervert, whose bones would whiten there upon the sands in the years to come, and whose memory of sin and treachery be washed away by the high tides.

Romeo was still upon the parapet lying amidst a mess of Spanish silks, which I rearranged so as to share.

"Hail, ye anointed deputy from heaven!" he said, smiling wanly and turning away on his side. "Ye must have had a grand fight. Faith, all about me, e'en my pillow—devil take him—went to see. They say 'twas Red. Did ye kill him?"

"Nay, a play without blood, but aye, a good one."

He seemed disappointed.

"You should have killed him."

"And carried the repentance of Job. No, thank you, Sir Shakespeare."

"The peace of Heaven is theirs that lift

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their swords in such a just and charitable war," he growled, whereat I laughed.

"You are feeling better," I said, delighted at hearing a quotation from his dead friend, and now able to close my eyes in comfort and with peace of mind.

CHAPTER XIII

SHATTUCK RETURNS

FROM high noon, when the sun blazed like a ball of fire and heat-waves simmered over our heads, until dusk, all work was suspended. In the continued absence of Shattuck, the pirates, now leaderless, sought either the cool caverns below and the wine-room, or shade upon the parapet.

Toward nightfall Romeo announced his recovery. The swelling on his leg was monstrous, but the pain had gone. He tested its strength with such unreasonableness that I called a halt near a jutting rock overlooking the sea where we sat down.

Low upon the horizon at the point of sea and sky, the setting sun was slowly dipping into a bed of crimson. The clouds were flaked with the glory of its departure; the air was balm.

And then suddenly, as several freebooters gave a yell of joy and dashed down to meet him, I beheld the unwelcome, unkempt, and undesirable figure of Shattuck.

"He hath been gone all day," said Romeo, turning to look with me. "What think you?"

"Some new deviltry."

He raised himself on elbow.

"You like him not and you know him not, and therefore art unreasonable. Zooks! I have seen him, single-handed, sweep a row of Dons, twenty of them, from our bulwarks into the sea, and withal he hath a heart——"

I interrupted him. "Like a kitten, do you but stroke his fur aright. I know, Romeo. Prate to me an' you must of knights and ladies, but not of butchers and blood. That man and I have no kinship."

"'Tis lucky none hear," retorted the lad.

"Aye, for them," I answered.

Then further converse became impossible; for the mob, screaming and shouting—Shattuck in their midst—swept by us and into the castle.

Then we remained silent, listening to the sounds and revelry of hell, and gazing into the vast bowl of sea and sky.

"I wonder," said Romeo after a silence, "what doth my little maid at this moment? Ah me! To be or not to be wedded to my Betty depends upon this venture; yea, verily, life itself hangs in scales of Shylock's making, with Fate's hand as a lever. Know you, Silver-Shoes, I would not raise the weights and read my future for all the wealth of El Dorado."

"There be others who feel the same," I replied grimly.

"And yet I understand not why I should feel so," he continued. "What is to be will be, despite the good and evil *jinn*, as the Almighty hath predestined. Why, then, should I fear, being in the hands of God?"

"Methinks you talk first and think afterward. Romeo, over yonder beyond the line of sea and sky lies England and all I hold most dear. Just as this wondrous color is fading into blackness and night, so dies all hope and honor within me. I can never return—Rodney Marley is no more!"

"Faugh!" he muttered after a pause, squinting at a lone star faintly discernible in the gray above, and seemingly disappointed I said no more of privy matters. "'Tis sweet pity a man of your humor hath no maid to chuck, nor will have none. They are angels cast in so small and delicate a mold, so winsome and pleasing, so virtuous and bewitching, that earth seems not their element; nor its coarse creatures, such as you and I, fit companions."

"We are their playthings. They are the devils," I grunted, only for argument, and to keep a mind from specters.

"Who didst save the day aboard the *Andalusia?* A woman. And who didst pull stools and tables away in the Ordinary, and slip a bad brace of pistols from sight of honest Fred? A woman, and my Betty. Ah, there is a maid! The Sabbath of myself, not alone of rest, but pleasure; the salt of my life! And now"—he pillowed his head in his arms, cleared his throat—and I was prepared for what followed:

"Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body's work's expired—
Looking on darkness which the blind do see;
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.
Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee and for myself no quiet finds."

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He paused, and I knew his thoughts were far away in Port Royal upon a valiant and tried-true little maid, who alone could chasten and keep within bounds his youthful frolics. I let him be, my own mind upon a scene of sunlight and green sward, the homely yet soul-handsome Cranston again polishing his dagger, and a good brother, ready as ever to pull me from the mire of hot folly.

The freebooters were about us, singing, talking and laughing in the starlight, and the click of dice in a pan not far away soon took Romeo to the group.

Fifty feet below, chained together and bolted to rings in their own dungeons, were the prisoners, several of whom had died from the torture and their wounds. Unhappy who fell into the hands of these outlaws when upon their vaunted expeditions.

The air was cool, and the moon threw a weird light over the slow-rolling ocean, as if a scarf of gold had been flung from beyond and, failing my clasp, lay helplessly out of reach. In the firelight, clustered about the dice with a score of kindred souls, sat my comrade, lost to Betty and his house of pieces of eight. Red Dick was among them, and gave the lad a friendly hand-clasp, which surprised him as much as it pleased me. I had but turned away, busied with wretched thoughts, when Shattuck sat down beside me.

"A lonesome picture this," he swept his hand in a half-circle seaward. "An' takes me back to the Devon lads at home. So, ye know, there comes a time, now an' then, when I itch to be in the tight little island. Aye, it comes often. Now what do y' think o' that?"

He spoke hesitatingly, as if afraid of his sentiment, yet hopeful it would fall upon sympathetic ears. In my mood I felt glad of his presence.

"I'd give up all hope of riches to be there with my troop," I answered.

"Would ye now, matey?" he said quickly. "Well, some o' us fight for one thing, an' some another, but most the Merry Men fight for gold. Ye fight with no caution—I saw that—an' 'tis in part to tell ye to have more care o' y'self that I come hither. I have seen many young sparks, but none so devilish, nor indifferent with his blade. An' ye got never a scratch methinks?"

"No, nothing of consequence."

"Siller-Shoes, we need ye. Y' are born to the sword, an' in taking Chagres, hath done well—albeit too foolhardy. All's not lost yet, an' remember, we be mortal. Did y' never think that milord Bucks might die?"

"No."

"Think on't. He is nigh threescore, an' alone stands 'twixt ye an' the fair land. Strike me dead, y' are but making a journey. 'Twould be wise to save y'self 'gainst the return," he paused. "They say y' fought with Red to-day?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Y' know, matey," he settled himself comfortably, "I've wondered how y' kept asleep so long. Morgan says to me the night I did ye service, when I stood 'twixt them purty shoes an' the youth in them an' death, he sez y' was hot-tempered an' needed watching, the which I have done an' well. Now hath come the fight what belonged to ye, for no man can join us an' not be of us, such as ye have been, without a fight. An' y' 'ave been baited by one of our best, who is more the lamb to-night than ever afore to my knowledge. He is loud in his praise o' ye for the man some say ye are."

"The fight was not of my choosing."

Shattuck held up his hand.

"Let be, matey. 'Tis past an' done with." He looked at me waggishly. "I put in a word to several not to remark on y' purty shoes."

"That is well said," I answered so sharply and suspiciously he laughed and lay back upon the ground.

His manner was pleasant and his voice milder than usual. Curiosity overcame discretion and I braved his displeasure.

"Where have you been the long day?"

"A-maying," he said lightly.

"You brought back no flowers."

"True, but none will grow again where I have picked, an' that y' may lay to."

"What hath become of your prisoner?"

He hesitated.

"There be times when to ask me questions means fight, an' I'm a better man than Red. As it is, there's no offense."

He hummed to himself for a space while I sat quiet, wondering if beneath his assumed friendliness he was vexed.

"They tell me," he said suddenly, "ye lost a Spaniard through the sea-window?"

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"Aye, by a rope, which I cut as soon as I could."

"The lads said 'twas by jumping, which was wrong, for there still clings a bit of cord to the bar." He breathed a sigh of relief, but I knew his mind was busy, for I heard the clicking of his forenail upon his tooth. "An' they tell me y' was close at his heels, wherein lies something wrong."

"What mean you?"

"Then y' was close to him?"

I hesitated.

"Yes," I answered.

"How could he 'a' had time to rip the bar, knot a cord, an' slip three hundred feet to safety?"

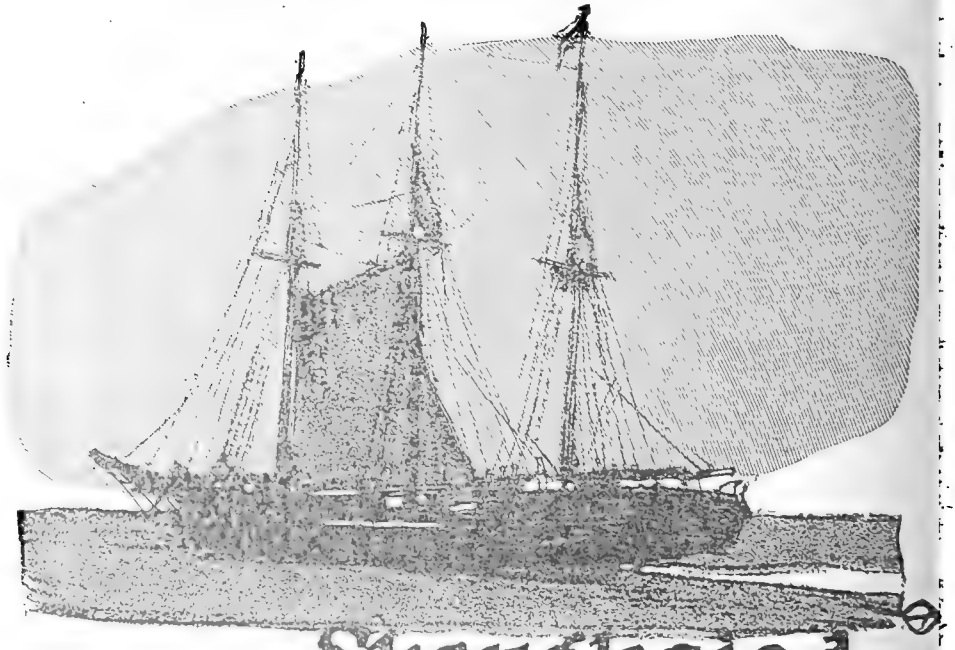
"Ask him and he can never tell you," I retorted, "for both he and the rope are fathoms deep."

Shattuck rose quickly.

"'Tis false, Siller-Shoes, an' he hath got away! Had it been taut when ye cut, 'twould have left strands to the piece remaining, an' there was none!"

And with that he left me, alone and uneasy in the starlight.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



Shanghaied

by George Noble

CAP'N RUEL PETTIPARD was not enthusiastic about the luck he was having in filling out the crew that was to carry him out by Sandy Hook.

Eight days before, when the four-masted ship *Nokomis* had tied up at South Street, she had been welcomed to New York by an ambulance and a patrol-wagon.

About half-way across the Western Ocean, on the way over from Grimsby, Juggins, a Russian-Finn able seaman, had engaged in a dispute with Alfredo, a shanghaied Filipino, as to the pronunciation of the

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words in the chorus of the chantey which ended:

> Boney was a war-yar;
> Way! Hay! Har!
> Boney was a war-yar:
> Jean François!

With a certain amount of interruption Alfredo had insisted on winding up the chorus in his ear-splitting falsetto:

> Boney on the water-wagon,
> Jim Fran—swoy!

One word led to another and these two words led to half a hundred which were more or less confused. Juggins, whose dignity was outraged by the manner in which the song was rendered, uttered a terse comment on Alfredo's moral principles, and at the same time allowed his left fist to come in violent contact with the white upper teeth of the Filipino.

It was evidence of the spirit with which Alfredo retaliated that on the noon of this very day the young internes of Bellevue and Allied Hospitals had talked in a nonchalant, yet ominous, way of a severe case of blood-poisoning which might result from the Spiggoty's attempt with a sheath-knife to make cold meat of Juggins, A. B.

The *Nokomis* was laden with case-oil for Nagasaki; her towboat was hired to pull her out into the stream on the morrow, and it is not altogether to be wondered at that Cap'n Ruel was inclined to be misanthropic.

"Here, you, Frenchy, and you, Long Slim from Wooloomooloo jail in Australia," he hailed two members of his crew, "a proper pair of God-send-Sunday men you be! Else you fetch me aboard a man for to fill the spare pew in my fo'c's'le by twelve o'clock the night I give you 'allowance' of fresh water—no more, no less—all the way down to the 'corner,' and, by the holy sailor, you'll wish I'd made holystones out of you for to whiten the decks o' this 'ere sweet glistenin' packet! Will I give ye work? Just watch it, you, else you bring me a two-legged man for an able seaman!"

THE sailormen pocketed the three silver dollars dealt out by Cap'n Pettipard for "walk-around money," and clambered over the ship's rail without offering to question the syllabus of their skipper, and without asking him any details in regard to how or where they should enlist their fellow-worker.

First, in the hope of finding a man who might want to go to sea, they headed for Swiss Mike's sailor boarding-house on Cherry Hill. No candidate for fo'c's'le honors apparent there, however; so they repaired to a nearby bar to discuss ways and means, and to learn what they might by keeping their eyes and ears open.

All they learned in the course of the afternoon was the latitude and longitude of this and various other places where "lime-juicer pulley-haulers" were supposed to seek hospitality when their vessels tied up under the shadow of Brooklyn Bridge. Although they made many acquaintances they did not fall in with any one who had reached a state of inebriety sufficiently acute to let himself be inveigled on board the *Nokomis*.

They discussed occasions when they themselves had been shanghaied; but as they failed in each case to remember the details leading up to the *coup de grâce*, these reminiscences were of no practical help to them.

Toward seven o'clock they had got no further than this in their quest; and, finding Battery Park lurching in a heavy swell, they hove-to there. So engrossed were they in the problem of navigation and in the gravity of their errand that they failed to heed the presence of a third person who was sitting on the end of their bench reading by the fading light of a July day.

At first, moreover, the solitary reader, Otis Greene, gave no thought to his uninvited companions. The youth was head over ears in that blood-curdling mystery, "Old Sleuth and the Strong-Arm Men." As he closed the paper covers and prepared his mind for the ferry-boat journey to a commonplace, unromantic home he became aware for the first time of the presence of the two men. They were just finishing an argument as to the precise number of steps up the side of the island of St. Helena.

FRENCHY produced the most tangible evidence in support of his contention. He said he had once tumbled from the top of the flight to the bottom—and he showed his scars.

Long Slim, defeated in debate, brought the conversation back to the subject of their quest. Said he:

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"If we goes back wi'oot a hand f'r him, the old man will be fair oncivil to us. Wot he means he says; an' wot he says ain't half, 'as the man said.' They's no apprentices wuth a pan o' lobscouse or dandyfunk in ary pub. in this 'ere town. Onless we lays out a hill billie, or a fair-weather piano-mover, or a constable, or the head of a Bethel, an' lug his body along the street afore twelve, old Limber-jaw 'll murder us every day atween the Hook an' the Roarin' Forties —an' then give us pore sailormen albatross meat f'r to scoff 'stead o' cracker-hash. Mayhap he'll put us to bailin' water from one draw-bucket to another wi' a teaspoon."

Leaning toward his shipmate and lowering his voice, although it was still audible to the listener on the end of the bench, Long Slim continued:

"Lad, they's only one way. It's got to be done by one stiff poke under the ear, an' we've no more'n half a watch f'r to turn the trick in. Arter we've laid out our cove we can carry him aboard an' no one aint goin' to be wise to it."

Not for nothing had Otis Greene studied the methods of the detective in fiction. He drew from his pocket a small round mirror, turned sideways on the park bench and, scanning his own reflection with more care than its appearance warranted, took in the features of the two desperate characters behind him.

As he might have guessed from the flavor of Long Slim's lingo they were sailors, hardened ruffians, bent on violence, perhaps worse!

Otis had no intention of confiding to the police the intelligence that had come to him. That was the last thing the detectives of the Old Sleuth school did!

Stepping across the street, with an eye on the plotters, he fortified himself with a hot frankfurter from the copper kettle of a sidewalk vendor, and planned a line of action. Then, his stern resolve strengthened by food, he sat down on another bench at some distance from the first and awaited events.

They were not long in coming. At the end of a few minutes the sailors got unsteadily on their feet and, in the gathering darkness, lurched off in the direction of Broadway.

Otis followed. His work was cut out for him, and the business was under way.

II

AT HALF past eleven that night the recruiting-agents of Cap'n Pettipard came forth from their last place of refreshment. To Otis, who had been waiting on the sidewalk opposite since the swinging doors had closed upon their entrance, it was obvious that some definite course of action had shaped itself in their minds. He felt intuitively that the time for deeds was at hand. He could not have defined his feelings any more clearly than that. And he was satisfied that the men had recognized neither him nor his purpose.

The sailormen walked toward the river, but had gone less than a block when they came to a stop in front of a ship-chandlery, in the lighted windows of which were displayed several handsome blankets, fancy "donkeys' breakfasts," seamen's bags, inlaid ditty-boxes, cakes of scented soap of many shapes and sizes, and some penny swagger sticks with bright ribbons 'round the handles.

It may have been a tray of ornamental, but cheap, jewelry that caught the attention of the able seamen, or it may have been some other object in the ship-chandler's display. As they turned away, Otis, effaced in a shadowy corner on the opposite side of the street, saw Long Slim suddenly seize Frenchy by the arm and draw him back to the window, in the contents of which the two at once appeared more interested than before.

All eyes for the cause of this unexpected movement, Otis swept the zone of his vision. At first he thought that, except for himself and the two men he was shadowing, the street was deserted. Two blocks away, at the foot of it, flickered the lights of South Street; and beyond, the dark bulk of a ship, its rigging lost in the gloom that shrouded the East River. Then, as the sailormen once more started forward, the youth became aware of the presence of another figure.

The lighted window at the nearer side of the ship-chandlery door, shedding its wan illumination on a patch of sidewalk, made the area in front of the unlighted window, beyond the doorway, darker by contrast—and in this dim spot stood the second witness to the evil purpose of Long Slim and Frenchy.

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NOW they were almost abreast of him, and still the stranger remained motionless, as if unconscious of their nearness.

Was he, too, to be a witness, or was he—a lump rose in Otis's throat with the thought—to be the victim?

Young Sleuth would have cried out, but he could not. He would have run, but his feet were rooted to the pavement.

From a late meeting being held in a neighboring waterside mission, that nestled under the darkest arch of Brooklyn Bridge, came the sound of singing—a Gospel hymn of repentance and salvation—and of a brighter land.

To this accompaniment was the fiendish deed wrought. There was no struggle, no outcry, no choke or gasp. One stiff poke under the ear had turned the trick.

Perhaps Long Slim knew his own strength and regulated the force of his blow accordingly, perhaps he had underestimated his power. But this was no time for the shipmates to ponder on that!

They bent over the prostrate form, gathered it up—Long Slim by the head, Frenchy by the heels—and broke into a lumbering run in the direction of the river.

OTIS was all for pursuit, but for the moment the flesh was contrary; his feet betrayed an unexpected impulse to carry him in the wrong direction. Before he conquered it the sailormen with their limp, perhaps lifeless, burden had galloped half the distance to South Street. Then Otis found his voice. Uttering a shrill alarm of "Murder!" he gave chase.

His shriek produced a natural result—the police were aroused. Often along the South Street front they hear harsh cries in the night. To anybody except an experienced policeman such a cry as young Greene's comes with a significance that always raises goose-flesh. None, once having heard that indescribable note, ever forgets it!

A signal by the police of the Old Slip station put the Harbor Squad in action. Working on an intuition of what was awry, the nautical myrmidons set about the capture of the evil-doers. To them the story was an old one.

Quicker than I can tell of it the police launch was shooting the beams of its searchlight into every lane between the wharves of the East River.

Women and children who knew no other home than the canal-boats were rudely awakened and bewildered by the glare.

Gradually the mouth of the net closed in on the sailormen who, less than a hundred short minutes before, covetous, but still innocent of crime, had gazed at the brass jewelry, the scented soap, and the penny swagger sticks in the ship-chandler's window.

As the beams of the searchlight fell on the sides of the *Nokomis*, the lookout in the police launch had a brief, but clear, vision of Long Slim and Frenchy tossing their burden from the wharf over the bulwarks of their ship, and clambering after it themselves.

Had they been a few seconds earlier they might have hidden all traces of the night's work. True, they would have had to encounter Cap'n Ruel Pettipard—just as happened now—but however earnestly the master of the *Nokomis* might advise doubtful methods of enlisting ship-hands, Long Slim and Frenchy well knew that he would be provoked by having to be a witness to the act itself. Still, they would have risked even his displeasure rather than to have fallen into the clutches of the police.

CAP'N RUEL had spent the evening resigned to the fact that he must lack one man to care for his ship when the time should come for her to jam herself around Cape Horn.

At the first sounds of the hue and cry in South Street, under his very jib-boom, a fear came to him that at daybreak he might find himself lacking *three* men instead of one.

He emerged from his cabin and walked toward the rail. Before he reached it the senseless form of the sailors' victim fell noisily on the deck, followed a moment later by an unsteady Frenchy and a more unsteady Long Slim; and, pell-mell on the heels of the miscreants, a police lieutenant and a disordered phalanx of patrolmen.

This was the stage set for Otis, arrived as an audience at the head of the wharf—in the parquet, as it were.

He saw the police lay hands on their prisoners, and examine the victim. He was witness to the disappearance of Cap'n Pettipard and the police lieutenant into the cabin; and to their reappearance soon afterwards, evidently on friendly terms.

He observed a stalwart officer lift the lifeless figure in his arms as one would have

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lifted a child and, leading the procession of his fellows, climb over the bulwarks to the wharf.

Wonder of all wonders, his eyes revealed to him Long Slim and Frenchy, roughly thrust aside by their captors, maintaining an uncertain, but apparently free, equilibrium at the fife-rail of the mainmast.

And as the epilogue to the action he heard the voice of stern old Cap'n Ruel. The listening-boy, trembling with anticipation, did not catch the first words, but as the Pettipard progressed, the skipper's tones gathered volume and smote the hot, still air of South Street with a picturesque distinctness. Lamented he:

"Oh, ye lubbers! Ye God-send-Sunday men! Ye galleymorphous he-sharks! Ye Rooshian-Finns! I send ye ashore for to get me a man for my fo'c's'le, an' ye get me a tailor's dummy—the waxen figger what the unrighteous keeper of a slop-shop leaves standing afore the door of his place, knowing as how it won't be stole by even a beachcomber in need of a new fit-out of shore-clothes! Oh, ye men from Alsace an' Lorraine! Ye niddering sumphs! Go for'ard, ye wasteful children!"

COCKNEY-NO-TOES
A True Tale of the Arctic

by Cassius Griffith

THE whalers have always called him Cockney. The Eskimos of the north Alaskan coast call him "No-Toes," because as a matter of fact he has no toes.

Cockney would sometimes tell grim tales of whaling or of the deeds of heroism and bravery of his comrades—not as real deeds of valor, but as ordinary occurrences of the great North and in the manner which the men of the North have of telling of such happenings—but when one referred to any part that he took in these adventures he would suddenly become quiet, and unless you immediately launched on another subject would unceremoniously take his leave, to pace up and down the whaler-deck with Antone the harpooner.

He was much averse to talking of himself, and, though you might glance inquiringly at the stumps of his feet, which had been taken off at the instep, and vaguely wonder over the marvelous trip this little fellow scarcely five feet tall had made when he saved the ship and lost these parts, not a word would ever fall from his lips which would lead you to know of the terrible suffering he endured on that occasion. Yet every whaler of the Behring and Arctic knows the story.

Especially strong was this respect and love in the heart of Antone the harpooner,

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Cockney's chum. Antone was a Portuguese negro who towered six feet four inches in the air. The affection these two remarkable figures bore one another was wrought by years of whaling in the North seas.

I had the story from several, with variations, but I think the most authentic account came from Antone, and it was garbed in all the strange picturesqueness of the whaler atmosphere and language.

IN QUARTERS FOR AN ARCTIC WINTER

THE ice completely blocked the Behring Straits and the blows foretelling the Winter storms were piling the floes one upon the other. The whaler Captain was spending his most anxious moments, as failing to break through that fifty-mile barrier which separates two great continents meant that the Winter must be spent within the frigid confines of the dread Arctic, and that meant something which even the iron heart of a whaler did not care to contemplate.

The *Narwhal* pushed her nose over the stretch of the wind-swept distance and failed to find a lead which would mean the return to civilization. Short of food, having provisioned for one year only, the Captain faced a Winter pregnant with ominous hardships and perils. To escape the driving floes in the Arctic, the Captain threshed the old whaler back over the yet clear water and made eastward to the mouth of the McKenzie River where he could go into Winter quarters at Herschel Island.

And there began the Winter which tore the souls from men; made beasts of brave men and heroes of cowards; which tore down the barriers of discipline and officialdom and made forecastle and cabin one.

The food was nearly gone when the preparations for Winter were completed and the rations were cut to quarter. Even on that, the Captain figured it would last but a few weeks. The Eskimos of the Alaskan coast had but little for themselves, and, when they had ascertained the predicament of the ship, they remained within their igloos and made no journeys to the silent *ung-yuk* vessel. Even the trade of rifles and cartridges brought but little of their scant store of walrus and seal-meat.

During the remaining days of the southward-bound sun, in which it raised its golden presence above the horizon, the Captain sent out parties to wait at the seal-holes, stalk the late walrus or slay any bird, fish or animal which came within distance of the weapons.

When the sun dipped for the last time behind the southern sky-line on its downward trail and the Arctic closed up for the months of darkness, the piles of meat had mounted to encouraging heights, but when this was apportioned between forty-two men, it meant but a short prolongation of the half-starving period.

STARVATION AHEAD

THE Arctic gales spent their fury over the limitless wastes and the *Narwhal* lay beneath its covering of ice and snow, a thing of inaction. The forty-two huddled in the narrow spaces where heat could be kept, and gradually grew irritable and morose, though ever silent. They were awed, for the most part, by the great encompassing silence of the Arctic night, which hung over the distances and filled them with its mysterious uneasiness and fear.

The time fast approached when the food would reach its end. The Captain turned this dread fact over in his mind and he thought of caribou on the mainland to the eastward. The almost uselessness of attempting to obtain this was too evident to him, but this could be the only means of surviving until Spring and the return of the sun. But that was miles away over trailless ice and he had obtained but five dogs from the Eskimos. These he had intended to use as food at the last moment.

The day came when the Captain listed the stores and found that, even on biscuits and salt beef, there was but enough for two weeks. He shook his head wearily and called a council with his five mates. But it was hard for them to come to the conclusion to send anybody over the ice in the darkness. Courage to face the ice and cold failed as the bodies weakened and death seemed easier aboard than among the hummocks.

THE DEPARTURE OF COCKNEY

THEN Cockney, who had been thinking of the hideousness of starvation, left his bunk in the forepeak and fought his way over the clogged decks aft to the Captain's cabin. He had wintered in the

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Arctic before, but when the vessel was out for two or more seasons and plentifully supplied with food, and he knew the surrounding country. He had hunted the caribou and knew where to find them.

"Cap'n," said the little man bluntly, "I want to go get some caribou."

The whaler Captain gravely surveyed him. It was Cockney's duty aboard the ship to remain in the crow's-nest with the Captain when the boats were out and signal at the sight of the whale. The Captain thought of this and the hardiness which Cockney had always shown.

"I can take those five dogs and the sled," Cockney began again as the Captain regarded him in silence, "and I know that coast. All I want is a rifle and plenty of ammunition and big Jim Hall out of the fo'c'sl'. He's the biggest man aboard the ship and I guess the strongest. We'll bring back the meat."

The Captain arose and placed a hand on the shoulder of the smaller man. He paused for a moment and a new light flared in his eyes.

"Cockney," he said slowly, a tremor of emotion thrilling his voice, "if there is a man aboard the ship who could do as you say, I believe it is you. You have my consent, though I would not order you to go. Fit yourself out as you please and take Hall, if he is willing to go. If you succeed you will save the ship; if you fail you will have died a nobler death than we."

A little later Cockney and Jim Hall, garbed in the winter furs of the Eskimos, went over the side of the *Narwhal* into the darkness of the Arctic night before the eyes of the entire crew. Each man aboard uttered a "good-by and good luck," as the two figures, the five dogs and the empty sled disappeared in the gloom toward the far mainland over the cheerless expanse of ice.

THE TERRIBLE LAND OF SNOW

COCKNEY turned his eyes to the heavens where the aurora flickered and glowed in the silence. Now that he contemplated it, standing amid the desolate, cold waste, he had never noticed it so beautiful—so cold. The vast ice fields spread out in their unending miles and the hummock-peaks showed specter-like in the pale flashes. The penetrating, chill breath of the expanse crept around him and stung the upturned face. Cockney had just emerged from his sleeping-bag. He turned and his glance fell on the sled loaded with the carcasses of eight caribou. This sent the thrill of encouragement through him and awakened him to action again. He kicked the sleeping-bag which contained the great body of Jim Hall.

"Come on, Jim," he shouted. "Come on out o' there and let's be on. We can't afford to sleep now—now that we've got the meat and they're needin' it so bad. They're waitin' for us. We've been gone fourteen days to-day and they're about all in. Twenty miles more and we're there."

From the bag came a sound like a groan, but no movement. Cockney repeated the kicking, increasing the force. A sense of fear swept through his brain.

"What's the matter, Jim; you're not gettin' cold, are you?"

"Cold? Cold?" muttered the big man, almost inaudibly. "No, I'm not cold. I'm jes' gettin' comf'table; jes' gettin' comf'table. Jes' a few more minutes and I'll be with you."

As the slow, telltale words issued from the bag, Cockney grabbed a sled rope-end. The fear in him increased. Jim was beginning to numb. He had slept the few hours of his sleep cold and the chill had begun to reach his veins. Cockney beat the bag heavily with the rope-end.

"Jim, come on out o' there, boy. What's matter with you, anyway? You ain't goin' to let that thing get you, are you? Get up and shake yourself. Come and get your blood started. You ain't goin' back on your pal?"

Jim moved drowsily as the rope beat up and down his body. He heard and the cold-fear took possession of him for a moment; the fear of the cold-lethargy. He squirmed out of the bag and made his feet.

"Keep movin' now, boy," cried Cockney; "roll up that bag and put it on the sled. Here, chew on this hunk o' meat as we go along. Hang on to the gee pole and we'll be off on the run."

Cockney thrust a strip of caribou meat into the hand of the big man and the dogs started at the crack of his whip.

Over the uneven surface of the ice the traveling taxed the energy of both men and dogs. The animals strained in their traces and stopped for assistance when the sled

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lurched deep in an ice-rut. The two men helped and the journey continued uninterrupted for some time with the big man seemingly gaining his warmth. But both men had been traveling hard for many days and were sorely tired. They had snatched but little sleep after the caribou had been loaded.

Cockney kept up as even a pace as the difficult ice would allow and trudged on apparently unconscious of the weariness which weighted down his muscles. But the wavering gait of the big man showed that the frost had entered his legs and that the grueling travel was telling. He clung to the gee pole and when his head sagged toward his breast he would catch himself with quick upward jerks. But the head sank lower each time, and with the slow coming of the drowsy weariness, thirst began to clutch at his throat and the big man began to think of satisfying it.

Cockney glanced back at the moment Hall reached for his second handful of snow. Hall looked him in the eye shamefacedly, but continued to suck in the balance in his mitten. Cockney fell back even with him and lashed him with the dog-whip.

"Stop it, Jim," he shouted. "Stop it, you fool! If you want to reach the ship, don't touch another pinch of snow. The frost will get you sure if you take it. Brace up, man! Don't commence that kind of thing, now when we're gettin' so close."

Jim gazed fixedly at the small man and in the wilding eyes Cockney read what he dreaded to see. Jim was getting numb again and was on the verge of allowing his mind to wander. The incessant strain on his overtaxed muscles was telling. Cockney continued to lash him with the dog-whip and the big fellow stumbled aimlessly on, clinging with one desperate hand to the gee pole.

COCKNEY kept the dogs straining in the traces and divided his attention between them and his companion. At every sag of Hall's head he plied the whip across the gaunt shoulders and around the wavering legs. Once Jim stooped again, muttering, to take up more snow. Cockney struck his chin up with the whip-stock. Jim laughed like a boy who had been caught in petty mischief and it sent a chill through Cockney.

Then the strain began to tell on Cockney. He found that the continued lashing of his comrade to keep him alive had weakened him. His phenomenal strength, though husbanded as a trailer of the snows does, had begun to ebb.

The sled lurched suddenly and slid deep into a hummock pit. Cockney saved himself on the caribou-meat. Jim pitched forward and landed in a heap off to the side, half burying himself in the snow. He made no effort to move, but lay laughing for a moment until the drowsiness ended the sound in a sigh. Cockney beat the massive body until his strength gave way and he tottered in his tracks. He called in vain for the big fellow to make an effort to arise, but Jim only half laughed once, and the sleep of the North took possession of him. Cockney saw that it was too late and that he would not rise voluntarily again.

After almost an hour of muscle-racking toil, Cockney got the body of his companion to the sled and lashed it there. Then he took up the trail again.

But now the mists had begun to swim before his eyes and his leg muscles to ache cruelly. He shouted to the dogs for courage and grasping the gee pole he pounded his feet over the snow, as vigorously as the worn tendons would allow, to withstand the creeping numbness. The dogs, as yet, went strong, although the sled now bore a heavier burden. Cockney was convinced that it was his strength which would tell the tale.

Two hours after the collapse of Hall, in a vivid flare of the aurora, Cockney believed he saw the black masts of the *Narwhal*. But if it were that, it was still many miles over the ice and he had now begun to waver perceptibly. Mists swam many-hued before his staring eyes and the mirages began to bother him. Sometimes he heard the voices of men and momentary madness seized him when he exerted himself to shout an answer to these taunting voices. The striking of a ship's bell sounded to his deceitful ears clear and strong, and in his effort to shout at this glad sound he stumbled.

But with his remaining strength he clung to the gee pole and was finally dragged to his feet again. Then he realized that the madness was gaining on him and that his muscles must now respond involuntarily

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to the determination steadfast in his brain. Later he began to babble, and, no longer cognizant of his surroundings or the trail, he stumbled on.

Over and over again he repeated to himself:

"I must do it! I must do it!"

When breath gave out he stopped this only to begin again when the sled lurched and the expression formed involuntarily on his frosted lips. No longer did he notice the straining dogs, nor the aurora, nor did he remember to look for the masts again when the aurora flared brilliantly. Only his legs worked ever onward and his labored breathing formed the words:

"I must do it."

THE HUNGER-CRAZED CREW OF THE NARWHAL

THE Captain lay in his cabin. Weakness had almost completely overcome him and he lay listless. Every day he had trained his glasses on the desolate waste of the miles of ice for any sign of Cockney and Hall. But none had been seen and this was the fourteenth day. Yet he had not given the little fellow up. He hoped, and this hope had caused him further to cut the rations. From two pieces of hard bread and an inch of salt beef a day he cut it to one biscuit and one bite of the meat.

The men forward grumbled at this and mutiny was whispered. Two of them had been crazed with hunger and seizing rifles had gone over the side on the ice where they had seen the fleeting Arctic foxes. They did not return, but remained the prey of those same foxes where they fell of exhaustion not far distant from the ship.

The mate, Hunter, entered the cabin. He clung to the partition as he stood over the Captain. His emaciated form bore no semblance of the heavy man whose boat had struck five whales during the preceding season.

"Captain," he whispered hoarsely, "the men forward have gone mad. They are saying that we are keeping the food from them; that we sent the dogs away so that they could not be eaten. They have lost all hope and say they want one square meal before they die. They are coming aft in a body to search the cabin-lockers."

Hunter finished his speech and clung more determinedly to the partition from exhaustion after the effort. He stared at the Captain with the wild, glazing glance of a starving man. Yet his mind had remained unaffected. He and the Captain and the other officers had allowed themselves the same food as was allotted to the men forward.

The prostrate man made an effort to rise, but fell back. Hunter assisted him at the second attempt and he painfully got to his feet.

"Get your rifle," he said, breathing heavily.

The mate staggered out to his cabin and a few minutes later returned, dragging his Winchester. The Captain had possessed himself of his and sat on the cabin-couch. The mate pulled himself over and sat with him.

"Where are the other officers?" the Captain asked.

"Almost done for," replied the mate. "Boyle tried to talk to them, but they fell on him. I think he's gone. The others have very little life left."

"We must hold them, Hunter. I believe Cockney will return. I know he will. We'll talk to them. If they won't listen, shoot!"

The two men then sat silent and waited. From time to time dull sounds came to them as if men were stumbling through the passages. Then the mutterings of crazed, starved humans. The mutterings grew louder and the shuffling of slow, dragging feet became distinct. A thud would tell that a man had stumbled and fallen. Then the scrape and drag of the crawling.

The cabin door fell in with a crash as the bodies lurched against it. The foremast hands sprawled over the floor with hoarse, animal cries. A gaunt, heavy-boned Norwegian got to his feet before the others. His eyes stared wildly and the two on the couch saw that he was quite mad. This madness gave him strength, though he wavered where he stood. He forgot his English and muttered broken sentences in his mother tongue. Then he snarled like a wild beast at the two, and, uttering a fiercer menace, lurched toward them with his thin hands upraised like enormous claws.

The mate raised his rifle a few inches and fired. The lean figure crumpled and slid to the floor.

The others of the foremast hands pulled

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themselves upright. For the most part they were muttering. One man began to speak. He paused after every few words to regain his strength.

"Cap'n, we're all goin' to die, an' we know it. Cockney's gone—he ain't comin' back. We've watched two weeks for him. He can't come back alive. Give us one good feed and let us die on full stomachs—if we're goin', we may as well have one good feed 'fore we go."

There was a burst of savagely assenting voices following this speech, and the other throats took up the cry of "Give us the grub! Give us the grub!"

The Captain and the mate kept their rifles pointed toward the starved mob. But they swayed menacingly forward. The savage strain crept through them all like fire and those in the rear stumbled heavily against those of the inner circle and the crowd lurched toward the couch. The Captain and the mate were covered by the rolling bodies and the rifles were swept from their hands.

The floor became a mass of arms and legs and squirming bodies. They moved slowly and painfully as if their owners were drunken. They were without purpose, however, and so weak that little damage was done. It was an unreasoning, crazed, muttering pile of figures which had little appearance of being human.

THE COMING OF COCKNEY

IT WAS the barking of dogs and shouts and cries which disentangled this hunger-crazed lot of men. Hearing this, they were stilled. Even the muttering-mad ceased to mouth inarticulate sounds. The Captain and the mate heard and they were the first on their feet.

"It's Cockney and Hall!" some hoarse voice announced feebly.

Then the hubbub of muttering began again, though in a wilder, different strain. Barbaric laughs mingled with frenzied cries. Every man crawled, pulled, pushed or stumbled toward the passage which led to the deck.

The Captain and the mate, men of stronger minds, had more control over their emaciated bodies. They reached the side and peered over. The sled lay against the side of the vessel, piled with the carcasses of the caribou. A great figure, frozen, was lashed on the top. Standing motionless at the gee pole was Cockney. His sightless eyes stared ahead and his frozen lips were making an effort to form words. He remained where the dogs had stopped the sled. His mind had gone long before, and he knew not that he had reached the ship. The muscles, long worn out, could not move another inch.

One dog lay dead in the traces. His body had been dragged by the others over the last two miles of the journey. Another dog stiffened as the halt was made. Only one remained with his head up. That was the leader, who had followed the trail without a guiding hand.

How the Captain and the mate and the others got Cockney and the meat over the side of the ship they were too frenzied to be able to remember afterward.

Three days later Cockney came slowly to life in the Captain's cabin. As his eyes opened, he muttered for a moment. Four words were repeated several times, vaguely, while his face lapsed into cruel strain.

"I must do it! I must do it!"

Whisky was forced between the darkened lips when the signs of returning life became evident. The Captain and the mate had watched beside the bunk since they recovered their strength.

These three men spoke no word to one another. What was in the hearts of all each man knew. But the Captain, strong ss he was of heart and used to perils and death, could not check the tears when he uncovered Cockney's feet and found them black. He turned and walked away. The mate too, turned, filled with uncontrollable emotion. Cockney read it in their faces and the numbness told him how far they were frozen.

But he smiled faintly and whispered,

"Well, I'm glad I'm livin' anyway."

The Captain took the chloroform from the medicine-chest. The mate administered it while the Captain prepared his crude instruments.

Though deep under the influence of the drug, Cockney screamed when the meat-saw (the only thing available) severed the bones of his instep.

When the bandages had been successfully placed and Cockney slept, the others of the crew came in uncovered, and looked silently and respectfully at the heroic little form.

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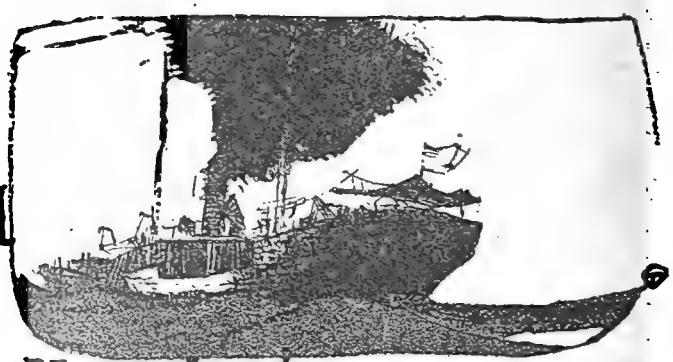
The Prodigal Son



Mr. Harrington Tries Life Ashore

by W. Townend

"IT IS the records of men like me," said Mr. Harrington, the second engineer of the S. S. *Umballa*, "that has made our Empire what it is. By this, I do not refer to the police-court reports, so what you are going to say, you needn't. But, son, listen to me, it was only by a most amazing miracle that our glorious Merchant Service, of which you are doubtless as proud as I am, was not deprived of its brightest jewel!" And Mr. Harrington chuckled.

"I never told you just how I came to go to sea, did I? Leaving out a lot, it was this way:

I'D SERVED my time in the shops, and, according to arrangements, was going to take on a job with an engineering firm. In an office, understand. Being what I am, I did nothing of the kind, of course. I had a row with my dad about something or other of no importance to this yarn, and went to sea. A course which I have regretted on and off ever since. I had all the life on the ocean wave I wanted, I tell you, in less than ten days.

I got on all right on the S. S. *Thomas Jackson*, though. A big old tub, reg'lar an' steady, well-found, four engineers and endless luxury. I stuck on her a year or two, and then went third on the *Mysore*.

Well, the *Arabella*, that I afterward was second on, with the shipload of maniacs, was the limit. But the *Mysore* was pretty near. Her engines wasn't so bad, no, and the food was fair, and the crews we got—well, they were as rotten as usual, of course, but not more so. It was the *Mysore* that was all wrong, built as an experiment, with everything stuck where it 'ud be most useless. The least little bit of wind on the beam an' it took us a week to get on an even keel again. An' don't talk of a Western Ocean voyage on that hooker! It turns me inside out to think of it.

That was not what worried me, however. There were other things. I'm easy enough to get along with, as a gen'ral rule, not being par'tic'ler as to my friends, but I never hit it off with the chief an' the second from the beginning. An' the only time the two others ever agreed was when they was swearing at me.

The chief, name of Williams, was one of those smart little men I've no use for. He'd a bit of a pull with the marine superintendent an' had been given a job as chief extra young. An' he didn't forget to let people know it either! He was a mean-fisted man, Percy Williams, just chock-a-block with his own importance, and as dignified and brass-bound as if he'd been a Dago Customs officer or able to write R. N. after his name.

Two years on the *Mysore* was all I wanted—two years too much—and I made up my mind to look for another ship when we reached England. She was going under survey, an' would be in dry dock for some

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time, I knew, as the owners, though willing to draw blood out of a stone, were not above puttying the cracks in the boilers, as you might say.

NOW, all this while I'd been at sea, I had not heard from the family, not one single, solitary line, though they knew —— well where to find me, and I was curious as to how they was gettin' on; whether their Christianity was bearing up, and if they were as charitable toward their neighbors' failings as they used to was. So you can imagine my paralyzed surprise when at Algiers, the last port we touched at on our way home, I got a letter from my dad.

It gave me quite a shock all down my spine when I saw his fist, and read what he had to say. The old chap begged me to come home. He was getting on in years, he said, an' was lonely. He said he wanted to see me more than anything in the world. Also, which was important, he had been very lucky since I left, an' had dropped into quite a pile of money. Wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, according to him, an' they had moved to a more stylish neighborhood. The girls had wished him to. And, in short, would I give up the hard life I was living an' come back to him.

Well, I thought an' thought an' thought from all points of view, an' the voyage home was the end of it. We weren't on speaking terms in the mess-room, none of us—save on business—an' there was an extra lot to do, owing to the donkey-man having got smashed up an' been left behind. That meant that the chief had to keep his own watch an' do more work than suited his liver. Also, we had Hell's own weather, an' the second had an abscess in his jaw, an' takin' it all round the *Mysore* was a shuddering oratorio of blasphemy.

So I said to myself that I'd done with the sea for good an' all, world without end, amen. I didn't tell the crowd I was abandoning a career of such promise. I just gave it out that I was sick an' going home to rest for a while.

Having developed pains in her tummy an' among other things having chipped off a propeller blade on a buoy, playful-like, goin' out of harbor, the *Mysore* retired into private life, otherwise dry dock at Cardiff, for extensive repairs and refit.

As I remarked before, the chief an' the second and I were not on the best of terms, but we all went on shore together before separating. We had three or four rounds of drinks an' when I left they was fighting like long-lost brothers an' the police whistles were blowing. Hating people not to be friendly, I departed, knowing I had done my best to reconcile 'em.

I got to London, an' was not welcomed by the Lord Mayor at Paddington Station as I might have been. However, by the aid of a judicious glass of beer at every pub I came to, and a row with a bobby for dancing on the pavement to the music of a street organ, I reached home slightly the worse for wear, but happy.

I was glad when we brought up alongside the house, an' the pleasant talk I had with the cabby over the fare rounded off things in good shape. He was no fighter, however, an' retired hastily full speed astern, leaving me an' my bag on the pavement.

I opened the gate an' went up the path an' knocked at the door.

"Go round to the back," says the girl who answered it.

"Not," says I, "if I know it."

An' then I explains that I was not the dustman, nor the rag-an'-bone man, but the heir to the ancestral estate. She looks at me kind of surprised an' shows me into the drawing-room.

Now for it, thinks I, an' steps inside, while the girl, who wore a cap an' white apron, giggles in the hall; I could hear her plain. There were two young ladies in the room, an' I stares at them for a bit, holding my hat in my hand, sheepish an' gentle as a Turkish pilot bummin' a sack of coals. They stares at me likewise.

"Who are you?" says one of them.

"Hullo!" says I. "Why, Fanny, why, Amelia, how are you?"

"I do believe it's Thomas," says Fanny, managing to hide her affection.

Now for the kissing an' hugging, thinks I, submitting in advance.

"Yes," says I, "I'm your brother back from the deep." A sensation, believe me.

"You're home now," says Fanny the older one, "and I suppose we ought to be glad it's no worse."

Here she dabs at her eyes with a handkerchief. They got up from their chairs an' gave me a peck on the cheek, an' said

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that they hoped I was goin' to reform an' be good an' so on. Then Fanny rings the bell, an' the maid, who'd no doubt been glued to the key-hole, comes in.

"Oh, Maud," says Fanny, "show Mr. Thomas up to his room, if you please."

"Don't you trouble, miss," says I. "Tell me whereabouts it is, and I——"

"Tom," says Amelia very red, and at that moment an old lady, stern an' stout an' most uncommon stately, sails in through the door.

Ever seen *Lady Macbeth* in the play? That was her—only more so. She glares at me, and I waits for her to pass.

"What!" says she. "So the prodigal has returned to his father's house, has he? The fatted calf is to be killed, of course."

An' by her sniff I recognized my Aunt Maria, who'd spent many enjoyable years prophesying evil about me.

"This is Aunt Maria," says Amelia. "She's living with us."

I responded in suitable terms, naturally, that I was glad to see her an' so on, but it was an awful lie, as I wasn't a bit, foreseeing head winds, squalls, dirty weather, and numerous breakdowns ahead.

THEN I went up-stairs under orders to be down soon, as it was nearly time to eat. I sat on my bed, spread with white most luxuriously, an' had a good think. Well, I was back again, and I was glad. After having had dealings with tramp-steamers, an' gin-shops, an' missions to seamen, an' other horrible institutions all over the world, I was at rest once more. But, all the same, I was half afraid I should have some trouble fitting in with things, especially as the family seemed to have struck a patch of high-grade society since I'd been away. But I was sick an' tired of the dog's life I'd been leading, an', well, anything to be shut of the sea and all its works; so I just determined to keep my mouth shut an' do as directed.

I landed in the drawing-room, an' found it was empty. I hung around for a minute or two an' then in comes the old man. Hadn't changed a bit: red cheeks, specs, white whiskers, as large as life.

"Thomas," he says, "my poor boy, I'm glad to see you." An' he grabbed both my hands in his an' looks at me. "Home again, after all these long years," he says. "Penitent at last!"

Here was the welcome I'd been waiting for! Though between you an' me an' the after—well, I didn't quite jump for joy at the "penitent-at-last" part of the address. It seemed too much like giving the prosecution a verdict without hearing the evidence for the defense, as you might so put it.

"But," says the old man, takin' me by the arm, "come along in to dinner." An' he leads me into the dining-room. "I will ask a blessing," says he.

Off he goes full tilt, till I thought he was trying to make up for all the times I'd forgotten to say grace since I'd left home, which was three times a day on an average. Anyhow, all things come to an end somewhen or other, an' we waded in at the grub.

Well, I learnt a lot during my first meal at home, I'm telling you—soup, fish, joint, three kinds of vegetables, two kinds of pudding an' dessert—an' I saw how thankful I ought to be at having been brought back to a life of luxury after the burgoo an' dry hash of the *Mysore*. Style, though, was not the word! It was a trifle different to what it had been before I'd gone to sea.

Money had put the starch into the girls all right, an' the old man, being religious, gave thanks frequent. Before we turned in each night he'd always read a piece from the Scriptures. First night, he chose the Prodigal Son. Yes, he read it slap through, and at every verse Aunt Maria sniffed. What do you think about that? I got to know the piece tol'rably well before I'd done. Also Aunt Maria's sniffs, which for scorn an' contempt beat anything I ever had to listen to.

IT TOOK me a few days to settle down. Fanny and Amelia ran the establishment, which meant that they sat about in fine dresses an' entertained their numerous friends an' acquaintances, an' went to parties, an' quarreled with Aunt Maria, an' generally let the establishment run itself. My Aunt Maria herself read good books an' made flannel underclothing for the heathen in Central Africa, an' kept the cook an' the two maids from flirting with the milkman an' grocer, not to mention the policeman on the beat an' a corporal in the Scots Guards who said he was the cook's brother.

I'm afraid I was not looked upon as being a credit to the family, except when

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people came to visit us. Then I was trotted out as: "Our brother, Thomas. Just returned from America. A great traveler. Come an' shake hands with Miss Jones, Thomas."

An' they'd all frown at me, as if to say: "Chuck a chest, you swab, an' don't look like a perishing dish-washer!" And then I had to sit on the edge of a chair, perspiring bountifully an' balancing a tea-cup in one hand an' telling impossible untruths with the other about my visit to Teddy Roosevelt at the White House an' my reflections on seeing the spot where *Little Eva* died.

Of course I had to have a new rig-out. Two new suits for every-day wear and one for best, a dozen pairs of white handkerchiefs and underclothing to match. Yes, and there was I going round each day in a boiled shirt an' cuffs. No dickey for this child.

Sad to relate, my Aunt Maria did not take to me as she ought to have done. Said that all things considered, we'd better not be seen walking out together. An opinion which no right-minded person could have objected to. I didn't. As for the old man, he'd a cabin of his own, an' was writing an essay on the influence of missionary work among the savages. He asked me about it. I said the only influence what I knew of, was teaching them to drink gin neat an' play draw-poker. *That*, however, wasn't put into the article. In fact, he very quickly put the kibosh on my theories an' said they was profane, an' dug out an extra special prayer for me that same night.

It was a change from being at sea. All night long in bed an' four meals a day. Breakfast was at nine: fried eggs an' bacon, as a matter of course; sausages, marmalade, coffee an' tea, toast an' lots of other things.

Punctual to the minute, the old man would fuss in, with his prayer-book. "Hurry up," he'd say, "if you please, Thomas. Fanny, is your Aunt Maria likely to be long?" An' so on. When all was assembled, he'd put on his specs, an' place four eggs in the egg-boiler. "Let us pray," he'd say, solemn-like, lighting the spirit lamp. Then he'd read a hunk of a psalm, and a collect or two, we chiming in reg'lar, till with one eye on the egg-boiler an' the other on the book an' his watch, he'd gabble: "Amen. *Puff!*" blowing out the flame, an' now: "Who'll have a boiled egg to start with?"

He liked them boiled three and a half minutes, an' timed his worship according.

Aunt Maria usen't to approve of me at prayer-time any more than in her less occupied moments.

"Thomas," she says, "why do you not close your eyes reverently, instead of keeping them open?"

Remarkable old lady, wasn't she? With a wonderful power of seein' through her eyelids.

An' then there was the pets. The old man had three dogs, all of them with permanent distemper from over-eating and lack of excitement, an' two cats whose foliage was moulting for the same reasons. Also Aunt Maria had a blear-eyed cockatoo. Each of them had four meals a day, same as us, about twice as much as a full-grown man gets at sea.

"That meat pie had better be kept for to-morrow," Fanny 'ud say.

"No, my dear, it hadn't;" an' the old man 'ud grab at it, upsetting his glass in so doing. "Ponto an' Fido an' Doodles an' Jujube an' Meemow," which were their forsaken names, "have hardly had a bit to eat all day." And a whacking big plateful 'ud be dumped down on the floor, an' the animals would scratch an' guzzle over their food, an' then fight, reg'lar as clockwork. "Poor thing! Diddums feel ill, then?"

Laugh! No, never! Pets are pets, but the only pet I ever took to was a stuffed squirrel we kept on the *Mysore*.

AFTER I'd been enjoying life at home for about six or seven days, it was announced that I was to turn to an' do a job of work.

"Thomas," says the old man to me, "I am comfortably situated an' have money." Cheering news. "But," says he, "I do not approve of a young man idling away his youth. Idleness is the curse of existence."

So the long and short of the matter was that I was put to a pen-driving job in an office. Yes, *me!* Of all people to work in an office! Every morning I had to start off about eight-fifteen, thereby missing the usual prayer-and-egg act, an' travel up to town in a tube-railway full of humans an'

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stale air, just to sit in a cubby in a small back street near the Bank of England an' the Royal Exchange till half past five each evening, or later, except Saturdays.

I was told by everybody that I was very lucky to have such an opportunity. Lucky! Good Lord! The old man had a friend he'd helped considerable with money an' other things and he knew the old man was looking for something for me to do, so he fixes it up with a pal who—who owed *him* money, I guess. Anyhow, whatever the reason or how, I had the job thrown at my head.

I didn't have much to do at first except sit at a desk an' try an' look wise. Me an' the office boy an' a lady typist, who had a room to herself and was a relation of the boss's, was the staff. The boss was tall, smooth-tongued an' very well dressed. A kind-hearted man with a bald head an' the beginnings of a promising double chin. He told me he'd instruct me in the ways of the business—quite condescending he was—and that if I kept my eyes open an' worked, I'd get on quick.

A fat lot of instructing he did. Never showed me a single thing about the business or anything connected with it. But keep my eyes open! God Almighty! I did that all right. I didn't understand things then as well as I do now: stocks an' shares an' mortgages an' things being what we traded in, and all of them everlasting mysteries to me. People used to be drifting in an' out to see the boss, but I never worried about them until later.

They'd got rid of a youngster to give me the place, so the office boy told me, and I asked the boss about it. He said I needn't worry. They'd been training the other chap up the same way as they was going to train me, an' had found him incompetent. Which sounded all right till I reflected that he couldn't have been more incompetent than I was. But I'd be all right in a month or so, said the boss, and if he didn't know, who did?

The pay was rotten, of course, but the old man came down handsome, so I didn't languish for want of cash.

"How do you like your work, Thomas?" he says to me one evening at dinner.

"It's all right," says I; "but it's not a man's work."

"Hem!" says Aunt Maria. "The least you can do, now we've saved you from a life of infamy, is to settle down an' behave yourself."

"Thomas," says Fanny, "if you tried to be a gentleman you'd be more agreeable."

To which remark there was no reply which would express my feelings in the way I wanted to express 'em.

An' then there was Charlie Mortimer. Oh! oh! He was Fanny's fiancey. Such a nice, plump young man was Charlie. Pink an' white complexion, and always dressed in fancy ties an' black clothes an' a top-hat. Fanny, they said, was a remarkably lucky girl to get him.

He played games, did Charlie Mortimer, tennis at times an' croquet an' chess, he said. I often wondered what he'd do if he was put anywhere where he'd had to fight for his life or what he'd say if he missed two of his meals running. But Mr. Charlie Mortimer looked down on me. I was only a rough, blue-molded tramp-steamer engineer, a hard case, a waster with no education or manners save in the way of machinery and how to make the best use of a couple of extra big fists.

I wasn't accustomed to his sort an' he knew it. Gave me good advice as to how to dress an' behave, until I wanted to put him over my knee and smack him quite hard. He'd have broken into pieces if you'd hit him. But, all the same, I didn't say anything, as I wanted to learn.

An' whenever we met, he'd speak to me, pitying like, as if I'd been a very small an' not over-intelligent infant, an' Fanny would giggle, "Isn't Charlie quaint?" till Charlie really began to imagine he was something great in the humor line, though he couldn't have seen a joke for himself if you'd put it under a magnifying glass for him to inspect.

Aunt Maria told me that if I tried to model myself on him, she'd have more respect for me.

"Model myself in every way, aunt?" says I.

"Yes," says she.

"Then," says I, "I'd better get about ten inches off my chest to begin with."

Which made her peevish. I often wished that Charlie Mortimer had been with us that last voyage on the *Mysore* when the salt horse crawled round the table-cloth and the big Squarehead fireman got the horrors and nearly killed the chief.

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EVERYTHING was too comfortable at home an' civilized an' respectable. I never was in such a respectable neighborhood in all my born days. They couldn't see further than their noses when it didn't suit 'em to. "You won't discover any of the abuses here in England," they'd say, "like you do abroad."

None of 'em having any idea they was talkin' rot. Abuses! Not see 'em! The difficulty was not to see 'em. I saw things in that respectable, Sabbath-keeping suburb that any of those wicked foreign places they was so fond of running down wouldn't have stood for a day. An' so I said, out loud, in the drawing-room one Sunday afternoon, much to their intense disgust, not liking to think such were.

Yes, an' the office was just as easy-going an' comfortable as home. All I did was to copy out letters, an' write things in an address-book, an' paste newspaper clippings in another book an' be civil to the boss an' wonder if I was earning my wages. But, as I said, I didn't understand that office as I do now. My God, but there are some awful swine knocking around the world!

People 'ud come in to see about investments, attracted by the letters we sent out proving all sorts of impossible things, old gentlemen an' young fellers from the country, an' widows. I thought it all right. Lord, what a fool, eh? I met an old clergyman coming out of the boss's office one day—by the door that led into the corridor—and he was shaking an' trembling as if he was sick.

"Hold up!" says I. "What's wrong?"

"I've just lost——" he says, an' there he stops.

"Handkerchief?" says I. "Purse—what?"

"The savings of twenty years," he says very quietly, an' off he goes, and I felt—well, I didn't know quite how I did feel.

But business was business, as the boss was always tellin' me, and if clients went contrary to his advice, why, what could they expect? But I didn't like it, somehow.

Whenever I looked at the people going up to town with me, I used to shiver. They were all so very soft an' flabby an' white. They didn't know they were, so they didn't mind it. They couldn't feel the same as I did. But I knew that I was getting to look just like them myself, an' dress the same way an' talk the same, an' then I began to wonder if I'd ever think the same way. I used to envy the man mucking about in the engine-cab, or the drivers of steam-rollers; anybody dirty, with a man's job and a lump of waste in his hand. But the fellers who went up to business with me each morning, would look down on *them* as inferior beings altogether. They'd never known anything different, an' they didn't want to, an' they never would.

The only change they ever got was two or three weeks at the sea in the Summer, perhaps, listening to the band on the pier an' looking at the pretty steamers sailing down the Channel. White collars an' cuffs, clean faces an': "Just look at that dirty man there oiling the machinery!"

ANYHOW, I'd been at home for three and a half weeks and already the hideous memory of the past was fading away rapidly. I was getting as fat as a prize hog an' turning up my nose at good victuals like a bloated duke. I'd forgotten that such a thing as a tail-end shaft or a water-gage existed, and each day I felt a bit more disagreeable an' fat-headed.

They were right, as they said at frequent intervals, they had rescued me from a life of dirt an' discomfort an' God knows what else, an' the prospects before me were terrific. If I stuck to the office, an' was never absent, an' did nothing wrong, an' never drank or swore, an' behaved like a plaster o' Paris image, an' never saw anything but the office an' the way there, an' the house in which I lived and every other house near, exactly like it in shape an' size, what—if I did all that—would happen? Why, some day I might be in a position to get married, an' have a house of my own, an' be looked up to an' respected by other people who'd done the same as me. That was what I should work for; my aim and object. Think of it! Kind of silly, eh?

The old man would lecture me now an' again, too, for my health's sake.

"I hope, my dear boy," he would say, "that you are appreciating our neighborhood. You should begin," says he, "to take part in our innocent festivities, now you are going to settle down among us permanently. We have many kind friends here and I am sure they would like to see you at their hospitable tables."

Hospitable elephants! I said I didn't care for that sort of thing, anyway, and

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I'd wait until I became better acquainted. But, to tell you the honest truth, Aunt Maria an' the cockatoo an' Doodles an' Jujube an' the rest was all the festivities I needed just then.

Not that the girls had given up all hope of my reformation, all the same. Fanny was the worst, having the beacon light of Charlie Mortimer's example before her eyes.

"Really, Thomas," says she, on one much-to-be-regretted occasion, "you ought to get a dress suit. It is absolutely essential. No man can live without one!"

I had, for a good many years, as I hinted.

"Yes," says Amelia, "when we give our party, you'll have to wear one, whether you want to or not."

That was the first I'd heard of any party.

"What?" says I. "When are we going to have a party?"

"Next week," says both of them simultaneous. "You must have a suit by then."

And I thought an' thought. This was coming it a bit too strong, even for me, and I felt like my moorings had got foul of my propeller.

Well, I was tired of it all, an' worried, too. Three weeks and over of indigestion an' home life an' tryin' to be good had about killed all the spirit in me. There was no mercy at home, either; no allowances made; everything had to be just so or not at all. And I was at last doing what the boss had told me to do, down at the office, an' keeping my eyes open; but in a way that he mightn't have appreciated. Yes, and I was seeing things that made me feel that the City of London and I were not meant for each other.

PERHAPS it was the talk of the party that did for me. I dunno. That or—or what happened afterward at the office. Man, but it makes me sick even now, to think of that white-faced, smooth-tongued vulture sitting in his room, robbing people who was fools enough to trust him! Yes, that was what it amounted to, an' for nearly three weeks I didn't see it.

I asked Charlie Mortimer about some of the things I was puzzled over, but I didn't get much satisfaction out of that young gentleman. In fact, he as much as told me I was the next best thing to an idiot.

"You don't understand business methods, that's all," says he. "It may seem queer to you, but it's probably all right. Finance is difficult to explain, and I do not think, candidly, that you will ever be a success in that line. Take my advice and get into something easier. Also," says he, "I notice that you are wearing brown socks and a green tie, which will never do."

"Well," says I, "I have met crimps an' boardin'-house runners an' bumboatmen an' ship-chandlers in every port of the uncivilized world, and I know what to expect. Besides, who cares a curse what happens to a sailor-man? But to settle down in the City of London an' find the same old game going on, an' old parsons an' widows an' suchlike innocents gettin' robbed—well, it kind of makes me miserable."

Charlie Mortimer just raised his eyebrows in a superior way and I felt like I'd been caught saying *amen* in the wrong place in church.

And the very next evenin' after this, the storm clouds, which had been dark an' threatenin' on the distant horizon, broke; with surprising results, as you might put it poetically. Fanny rushes into the drawing-room like a hurricane off Hatteras.

"Thomas," she says, "how can you?"

"What's the matter?" says I, startled out of my usual calm, an' wonderin' which of the pernicious animals I'd kicked last, an' whether the cockatoo had died of my emptying a jug of milk over his, her, or its head.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," says Fanny.

"What is it?" says I, gettin' really frightened.

And then came the awful truth, hurled at my head with sickening vigor:

"Charlie," says Fanny, pausing to give me time to shiver, "Charlie tells me he saw you slinking out of the house last night after supper without a hat on!"

"It wasn't a cold night," says I. "And at sea I often used to go for days without putting a hat on my head, so you needn't worry," I says. "But if you are curious as to what I was doing out-of-doors at such an hour, I don't mind telling you I was off to have a drink."

"What!" says she. "Then it *was* you he saw going into so many public-houses?"

"It was," says I, very weary. "But tell your Mr. Charles Mortimer that if he follows me again anywhere, I'll be so

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annoyed that I'll speak crossly to him an' hurt his feelings. I may not be quite the judge of haberdashery that he is," says I, "but I could lick him an' fifty others like him, an' don't you forget it."

An' for once I was really mad.

"I always said," says Aunt Maria, stepping out from behind the door, "that it was a mistake to let Thomas have a latch-key, and I fancied all along," she says, "that Thomas would come to a bad end some day. I am sure of it now."

And all I had was three wretched half-pints of bitter. Three!

That night at prayers, Dad put in a special extra burst of eloquence for one who had strayed into darkness. Meaning pubs, I suppose.

WHAT do you think, though, that Charlie Mortimer an' my two sisters did the next day? It makes me smile now, but I didn't like it one little bit at the time. They went an' bought me a dress suit; a satin-lined suit of black swaller-tailed party clothes. I found it laid out on my bed. A present! Not much! There was the bill with it. They told me at dinner that evening, Fanny and Amelia did, that I had to have a suit like that and they knew that I'd never 've ordered them myself. An' says Fanny,

"Now you have no excuse for not coming to the party."

No excuse! Little they knew! I had a thousand.

"Oh!" says I. "Expect me to dance?"

"Of course."

"Oh!" says I, very thoughtful. "An' wear those clothes you got for me, eh?"

"Yes," says Aunt Maria, "an' perhaps you'll do us the favor—I do not say it's possible—but perhaps you'll try for once in your life to behave like a gentleman."

I remember her very words as if it was yesterday.

"—— being a gentleman!" says I under my breath to Doodles an' Meemow.

But I knew, all the time, that they were all being kind an' doing their level best to keep me straight. But nothing I did suited them; an' everything they did seemed to rub me the wrong way. The old man was as good as they make 'em; he'd have given me the shoes off his feet, an' the coat off his back an' his last penny, if I'd asked him. But, I dunno, I tried to appreciate it all; I tried hard, and I wasn't able to.

I don't think it was the party an' the dress suit an' having to dance what worried me really. There were other things. At lunch-time, the day of that kick-up, I'd been to London Bridge an' leant over the parapet to look at the ships unloadin'.

"Miserable objects," says I to myself. "Miserable objects!"

And I listened to the winches an' the curses of the cargo-men. I tried to fit every one's job on to him as I watched. That feller was the chief, sitting by the galley; that dirty greaser in the boiler-suit, the third engineer, same as I used to be; that was the mate yelling on the poop; an' so on. An' then I thanked God that it was they who'd be putting out to sea, not me. I knew what it was. They'd be rolling down the Bay inside a week, and I'd be sleeping sound on shore and eating in comfort. And I listened to the people talking about the ships, poor, rotten, rusty little ships, an' nearly cried—I was so glad I'd left the sea.

Well, that evenin', as I said, I run foul of the family, an' felt kind of uncomfortable an' heavy. An' the next mornin' I got a letter, Cardiff postmark. I opened it, knowing the fist, an' read it slowly.

> The ship will be ready for sea in a few days. If you are going to make another voyage with us, come along at once. We got on very well in the mess-room and I should like you to come back.
>
> Yours truly,
>
> P. WILLIAMS.

I looked at it, an' laughed. Go back on the *Mysore!* No —— fear of that! As if I'd be such a blazing fool, after the misery of the past two years! And I went up to the City very thankful that I'd got a good shore job, and I determined to cling to it like a barnacle. Go to sea again! Not much!

Lunch-time I has a look at the ships again.

WHEN I got back to the office, there was a girl sitting there, and as sure as I'm alive, she was crying to herself. I remembered then that I had seen her once or twice before; a quiet little thing, always dressed in black.

"Hullo!" says I. "What on earth's the matter?"

The office boy winks at me.

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"We've got to get rid of her, somehow," he whispers. "The boss says he won't see her. I've told her, an' she won't go."

"None of my business," says I.

The girl didn't say a word, just sat there cryin' and at last I spoke to her again.

"Is there anything the matter?" says I, once more. Not a word did she say. "Look here!" says I. "Have you lost any money?"

"Money!" she says, with her eyes just blazing. "As if you didn't know! As if everybody who came near this place didn't lose money!"

"I'm sorry," says I, "but I've not been here long, an' ——"

Then she begins to laugh; and the way she laughed was more like crying than anything I ever heard.

"Every penny," she says. "Every penny in the world gone, because I trusted him!"

I sat down and asked her to tell me everything. I won't go into the details, they make me sick, but that swine I was working for had got hold of her money, invested it for her—or said he did—and lost it. Yes, that was the game. A bucket-shop, they call it. He'd promised to double her money or some such lie, an' she believed it. Man, but there's always somebody to believe everything! An' she worked for her living, an'—oh, I dunno, had a sick husband and a couple of babies. Nice kind of story to listen to, wasn't it?

"If," says I, "you'd let me help ——"

But she stopped me.

"I am not a beggar," says she. "I did not come here for charity, and I know that the money has gone. It was my own fault for trusting him. Can I blame any other person?" says she. "No. I can not. It would be easier to bear if I could. I have come to tell him what I think of him. That's all. I shall stay here till he sees me, and I'll come back to-morrow if I can't see him to-day!"

I thought a while, and then made up my mind what to do. And, son, I did it.

"Come with me," says I. And I kicked open the door of the boss's room. "A lady to see you, sir," I says.

Son, I never enjoyed anything so much as I did the next ten minutes. He tried to get away, but he couldn't. I picked up a heavy ruler, ebony it was, and said I'd brain him if he stirred hand or foot. And there he had to sit an' listen to what that girl had to tell him. She spoke quietly, without any fuss, and may I never be spoken to by a woman as he was. He was white to the lips when she'd finished. An' when I'd finished, he—well——

"Now," says I, "you've not acted like a man so far; see what you can do now. Stand up!" I says, and I dropped the ruler.

He was mad, raving mad, and a head taller than me, pretty near. Never have I had such joy as when his fist caught me on the mouth. Never. All the unhappiness of the past month boiled over, and—yes, it didn't last long. A black eye I got, and a cut lip, but he—son, he was like the engines of the *Umballa*: in need of copious repairs, and not ornamental. I just smashed him all round that office, hard, and it was heaven! An' when there was nothing more to be done, then I resigned my position in the firm.

OH, I was forgetting. I managed to get the girl back her money again, and I didn't ask for it either. It was when I was hauling him out from under the table, by the seat of his breeches, that he promised. He was only a flabby sort of thing, anyhow. But I got that money in hard cash, and—as I said—then I handed in my resignation with a final kick.

I went home, packed all my duds into my bag, fetched a cab, an' strolled into the dining-room. I kissed Aunt Maria an' the two girls, an' held out my hand to the old man.

"I'm off again," says I, just smiling with joy. "I'm leaving home. Give Charlie my love and tell him finance is not half so difficult as he imagines. But," says I, "tell him that I do not think my methods would appeal to the City."

"But," says the family, "you're not going away?"

"I am," says I. "I've tried to settle down and be respectable and I can not do it. So I'm off to the husks an' the swine an'—the other things, as, rotten or not, I can not live without them. I'm going back to the old *Mysore* at Cardiff, bound for Alexandria. An'," says I, "if I don't smell the smell of the bilges before to-morrow's sun rises, I'll die."

An' that was the way the prodigal son went off to sea again.

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The End of Jim Sontag

By George Vaux Bacon

WE WERE sitting in a corner of a dirty café half buried in the side of a sand-hill, while the cranes that were grading Gary, yellow and raw, to the level of its future streets, swung and chugged in the heat without. We had gotten to talking of the queer ways of men among men, which in faith are stranger even than the way of a maid with a man.

"It's a fact," said Irons, who has traveled more over these United States and seen stranger things with his own eyes than any man I've known, "that there are things I've seen happen which are ten times more dramatic to me than any imaginary story. It isn't ordinarily that a man sees Fate actually work out on a scientific basis before his eyes. Once I saw it happen."

"Where?" I asked.

"In Bakersfield, California," said Irons. "It is the story of the end of Jim Sontag of Bakersfield, who was one of the worst men that the gold rush ever produced in California, and one of the queerest. The oddest thing about him was that the one thing in the world he seemed to care about was to die with his boots on."

"That sure is some ambition," I commented.

"Yes," said Irons, "and it is by our ambitions that Fate orders our destinies all right, I guess. At least it was that way with Jim Sontag."

And he told the story in his own way:

FROM the time of the location of the oil-fields around it, up to the election of Governor Hiram Johnson, Bakersfield enjoyed the reputation of being the toughest city in the United States among those who knew it. It had a population of something like fifteen or twenty thousand along about the middle of its existence, and eighteen solid blocks of the worst tenderloin I have ever seen, old Los Angeles and the Barbary Coast included. The money taken into its dives each year would have staggered a national bank. Every bar in the city had opposite it a solid bank of slot-machines, going every minute. The saloon men imported nickels from San Francisco, and were glad to pay express charges of five dollars and a half for every hundred dollars' worth. You never saw a dime in Bakersfield, because they couldn't be used in the slot-machines.

I guess Jim Sontag was the only thing in the world tougher than Bakersfield. When

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a California cowboy gets a bronco that just naturally can't be busted, and will throw anything and everything that walks in shoe-leather, he's apt to name him Sontag.

Sontag stood about six feet four in the boots he was so superstitiously attached to, carried a long mustache about the color of coal smoke, two .45's, absolutely no sense of fear, a sense of humor outside of his boots, and one or two individual peculiarities that marked him as unique among the bad-men of his day.

IN THE first place, he started in as a real '49er, and lived longer than any other bad-man on record. Secondly, he was the only one of his breed I ever heard of who enjoyed fighting with his fists just as much as he did with his shooting-irons. Although he could shoot the spot out of an ace of spades at fifty yards as easily as an Englishman can smell a cup of tea at a mile and a half after four o'clock in the afternoon, he loved to fight with his big fists, that were like a pair of hairy hams.

Your traditional bad-man likes his trouble served up with hot-lead sauce; but Jim Sontag, who was a real one, could stand a bunch of fives in a mix-up and get more solid pleasure out of smashing people with his hands than anything this side of the cave-era I know of.

He didn't neglect the shooting side of his business, though, and his methods of practise along some lines were worthy of mention somewhere in the Hall of Fame. He used to stand stark naked in front of a mirror every night, an empty .45 in each hand, clicking the guns alternately and aiming them at his reflection. As he aimed and clicked, he dodged.

The aiming and clicking would grow faster and faster, till the reflection before him dodged hither and thither in the mirror with the agility of a panther, always keeping out of line of the clicking revolvers. He increased the speed of this performance nightly and swore that it was the best exercise in the world, and absolutely prevented any one from ever being able to shoot him. The curious part of the thing was, that tales of his ability to dodge bullets were continually coming in to Bakersfield from all over California.

Like all Western fighters, he was not slow to "blow" about his fighting qualities; but he was no bluffer and could make every boast good. In fact, it was his picturesque method of calling the bluff of Marshal Gibson of Bakersfield that first made him famous in the town, his fame later leading to a position as a sort of town curiosity, and it is a fact that Bakersfieldians are jealous of their relation as townies to the famous bad-man to this day. So much so that to the rest of California Bakersfield and Sontag became sort of correlative or complementary terms, like Romeo and Juliet or the Devil and Hell, generally the latter.

Having heard of Sontag's doings in other parts of the State, Gibson loudly proclaimed to a circle of gentlemen in Silver Jack's place one evening that if the bad-man ever set foot in Bakersfield he, Marshal Gibson, would blow said bad-man off the face of the earth before he could get three drinks inside the city limits. News like that travels fast.

Sontag was prospecting out in the mountains and heard of the remark three days later from the lips of a pal who shortly afterward was executed in 'Frisco for a murder in a joss-house. A week later Sontag stood in front of Silver Jack's bar and ordered a drink. From the bar he walked out and leaned against the door-post at the entrance to the saloon.

IT JUST chanced that Gibson, inadvertently, walked down the street toward the place at that minute, and some one standing by made the remark that he was the marshal. Gibson must have recognized Sontag from his description, or by some psychological means, for he stopped dead in his tracks and stared at the bad-man, who returned the stare with interest.

Without the slighest warning, Sontag whipped out his iron, and shooting the dust around Gibson's feet, gave vent to a true Western yell and challenge.

"Wh-o-o-o-o-o-p-e-e-e-e-e! Come get me, Gibby! Come get me!"

Gibson danced for a few seconds, then turned and ran as fast as his official legs could carry him. Sontag replaced his guns, kept yelling for a few minutes more to "Gibby" to "come get him" and returned to the bar for another drink. "Gibby," it may be stated, never "came," although

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Sontag made it a point to yell for him, vociferously, every time he arrived at Silver Jack's, and his call became a sort of battle-cry, announcing to a population, well loaded for his coming with pride in their bad-man, lots of whisky, ammunition and good nature, that their god of battle was once more in the midst of his cherished battle-ground.

Inasmuch as he never arrived without a corking line of yarns dealing in battle and sudden death, of which he had been the central figure, preceding him, his advent was a godsend to a community where even sin had gotten tiresome.

Sontag was a living dime novel, and, like all dime novels, his final appearance and the climax of his career was heralded with a story that took the breath even out of the blasé frequenters of Silver Jack's bar.

It was told that down in San Bernardino County he had strolled into a crossroads saloon for a drink. A chunk of meat lay on a table in the place. Beside the meat lay a long-bladed, keen-edged knife, such as any Japanese cook will use to cut a roast of beef. After he'd had his drink, Sontag strolled over to the table and, although free lunches were practically unknown in the region, grasped the knife and cut himself off a generous slice of the meat, which he stuffed into his mouth. The proprietor rushed out from a door in the back of the place and began to call him down. It seemed the meat was for expected lunchers.

Sontag turned on him:

"What the —— are you trying to put over here?" he yelled.

"My ——, do you think you own the place because you bought a drink?" the man answered.

"Yes," roared Sontag, and while a fascinated audience at the bar looked on he grabbed the man's hair with one hand, sliced off his head with one stroke of the meat-knife, and set it on the bar. Then he flashed out his artillery and backed out of the saloon, leaving the crowd divided between interest in his leveled .45's and a widening pool of blood around the ghastly head.

This beautiful legend aroused Bakersfield to a pitch of interest it had not felt for years. The Homeric and sublime cruelty of the act appealed to a population which, at that time, was distinctly Homeric in its view of the value of life as regards the greater value of a good story. Everybody came to town to see the hero of this mighty tale. Even Kerns City, which, though only about a mile away from Bakersfield, was to it like a bleating lambkin to a bull with a toothache for badness, sent a retinue of welcome.

AMONG them, with thoughts of his own, loped a little fellow whose true Christian name is unknown, but who was known generally as Shorty. Shorty was the bad-man of Kerns City, and the peculiar thing about it was that he took his badness to heart as much as Sontag did his boots. He viewed a reputation for badness with the same sort of reverence the artist with a little "a" has for Art with a big "A." Why he wanted to meet Sontag in the face of professional jealousy and artistic rivalry, which he must have felt for one so overmasteringly greater than he in his desire, it is hard to say. He rode in silence.

As he entered the environs of Bakersfield a friend met him, adding to the usual salutation:

"'Course you know Sontag's in town."

"So?" queried Shorty non-committally.

"Yep, and I guess he's over at Silver Jack's now. He's a bad-man. Worst man in California, I guess. They say Gibson is hiding out behind the freight depot."

"Huh!" was the only comment Shorty made. "So long."

"So long."

Shorty rode down the streets of Bakersfield with a frown gathering on his forehead. He had never seen Sontag, it was true; but he began to feel welling up into his heart a dislike and disdain for him. Sontag had been over to Kerns City and had raised a little hell in that peaceful place once; but Shorty had been away at the time. Shorty began to feel that Sontag's doings in Kerns City as a rival bad-man were an insult to him. Your bad-man is your true monopolist.

He swung off his pony in front of Silver Jack's place and strode in, where Sontag, in the midst of a great crowd, was buying drinks and drinking them, interspersing loud conversation with loud invitations to "Gibby" to come get him.

Shorty walked up to the bar and ordered a drink. Nobody paid any attention to

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him, least of all Sontag, at whom Shorty stared and felt rising up in him a growing sense of dislike that mounted rapidly to hatred. He had a couple more drinks. The conversation languished for a few moments, and Shorty deliberately picked up Sontag's gaze with an insolent stare.

Silver Jack happened to be out at the moment, and there was a green barkeep on the job. As the captain of a ship should be the one man on board whom nothing can strike with panic, so a barkeep in Bakersfield in those days ought to have been a man without anything but one steel nerve and a pair of nimble hands and watchful eyes. The barkeep showed signs of nervousness. Shorty noticed it and it seemed to increase his irritation.

Still watching the barkeep, he said in a loud voice:

"Give me a drink, Charley, and something that no one else in this here place is drinking. I want a high-class drink."

Sontag stopped the barkeep with a gesture.

"Wait a minute, Charley. This little feller's going to have a drink with me. Ask him what he'll have."

An expectant hush fell over the crowd. The barkeep leaned over and asked Shorty what he wanted.

"I'll buy me own drinks, see?" said Shorty slowly. "I don't drink with none o' these guys at all."

Alarm chased incredulity and amazement across the barkeep's face. He showed he was green at the game, and said the worst thing he could:

"Aw, have a drink wid him. He's a bad-man and might raise —— wid yer if yer don't."

"Oh, is that so?" said Shorty.

He turned to Sontag, who towered six inches above him, and thrusting out his jaw, leaned over the edge of the bar, and snarled:

"So you're the toughest guy in California, are yuh?"

Living up to his reputation for always doing the unexpected, Sontag threw back his head and roared with laughter.

"Well, well, if here ain't little Clarence, wandered all this way from the nursery. You better gwan home. You'll be ruined."

A thunder of mirth from the surrounding gentlemen accompanied this sally. Shorty's face grew purple, and his hand went to his holster. Quicker than a flash, Sontag with his famous agility had the gun out of the holster first, grabbed Shorty by the collar of his shirt with one hand, and smashing him a terrific blow on the nose, flung him like a sack of oats into the far corner of the saloon, where he lay motionless. No one dared to touch him, and all drank to Sontag's toast.

"Here's to the poor little shrimp in the corner, who'll never die like a man, because although he may have some guts, he ain't got nothin' else."

He banged his boots on the floor and drained the glass with a gulp.

SHORTY stayed in the corner, but he wasn't unconscious. That shout of laughter had thrust the lance of ridicule into his heart, and he lay without even the courage to get up. In one blow he had been made a coward and a laughing-stock. But he heard Sontag's words, and he hated him more than any man ever hated anything else in the world. How long he lay there he didn't know, but all the time thoughts kept chasing themselves through his mind, as they will through the mind of a man about half-dazed, and one preëminent thought rode high among them.

He had been there a good while, though, when a clean-cut looking stranger, with a Stetson hat and well-made clothes, strolled in and ordered a drink. Then he looked around at the crowd, smiled to himself, and ordered drinks for every one in the house.

Sontag lurched up to him, his big black mustache bristling and damp with liquor, his eyes bloodshot from the drinks he had had.

"I'm buyin' the drinks in this here bar to-day, stranger," he said, "and my name is Jim Sontag. There ain't nobody does except what I say here, because I don't give a —— for no one, and my ambition is to die with my boots on."

The stranger calmly lit a cigar. When it was pulling well, he leveled a pair of clear eyes at Sontag, and said:

"Names don't cut any ice with me, pardner. When I buy drinks, I buy drinks, and I don't intend to be contradicted by any one, see? As for your ambition, I sure am willing to concede that you'll die with your boots on, from what I know of you in the last minute."

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THERE was a stir in the corner. Sontag slowly stepped backward against the bar. His hand darted to his hip. There were three flashes and reports, a puff of pungent smoke, but they were from the stranger's gun, not Sontag's. The bad-man fell back against the bar, and sank slowly to the sanded floor, his booted feet sliding out in front of him.

Out of the corner where he had lain, slobbering and crying, staggering blindly from side to side, came Shorty. He flung himself at the dying man's feet, and, clutching and clawing at the heavy boots, pulled them off and flung them among the crowd, screaming:

"Now, by God, you won't die with your boots on!"

A convulsion rippled down Sontag's body, and he lay dead, in his stocking feet.

When the excitement and smoke had cleared away, the well-dressed stranger had disappeared, and no one seems to have seen him go. There was a story to the effect that he was the lover of a woman whom Sontag shot in a stage-coach hold-up because she had wiggled so when he tried to cut off one of her fingers on which was a tight-fitting diamond ring. But the real facts were probably never known in Bakersfield, and never will be, for the bad-man of the type of Jim Sontag has passed away from the California oil-fields forever.

The Mark of the Broad Arrow

by Stephen Allen Reynolds

"THEN you won't take my friend's case?" I grumbled as I picked up my hat and started to leave Parr's office.

"I'm sorry, Clarke, indeed I am; but I wouldn't touch it for a thousand dollars a day."

Godfrey Parr, the head of The International Bureau of Investigation, pushed his chair back from his flat-topped desk, but simultaneously motioned for me to retain my seat.

"I hate to disoblige a friend and clubfellow," he went on, "and you're entitled to an explanation. When I started this International Bureau less than five years ago I had barely enough money to pay my office expenses for a single month.

"I was tired of working for others, and so took a rather desperate chance to set up a business for myself. During the first week but three prospective clients visited me—two women and a man. Each of the women wanted to retain me to shadow her husband. The man wanted me to report on his wife. Had I accepted the cases I'd have received a retaining fee of at least twenty-five dollars for each case—to say nothing of liberal expense money.

"I needed the money badly, and it would

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be useless for me to deny that I was strongly tempted, but as I had resolved to steer clear of divorce work when I first conceived the establishment of this bureau, I turned them down. Before I accepted my first legitimate retainer I was compelled to pawn my watch in order to meet a telephone bill; a scarf-pin went toward paying my expenses on the first case; but in the end I won out, as you know. Trailing men and women with giddy proclivities around town never appealed to me as a lifework.

"Here are the names and addresses of two agencies that handle that line of work," he added. "They're as reliable as any of them—but that isn't saying much. If Cross is bound to hire detectives, you might refer him to either of them."

I THANKED Parr, and notwithstanding the fact that my mission was a fruitless one, I still lingered, loath to go. The leather-upholstered chair was comfortable; the day a hot one; Parr's society agreeable; his office cool.

"Stay and lunch with me, if you will," Parr invited me. "I'll be ready in half an hour or so. It's really a pleasure to see you down here again."

I proceeded to make myself comfortable while Parr received some clients. Lazily I listened to the hum of busy Broadway, far below, from without; while for the next half-hour I overheard stocks, margins, extradition treaties, and many other things discussed within. Never had I had a better opportunity of surveying his workshop at my leisure.

A large map of the United States hung upon one of the walls. Upon the opposite wall hung a series of charts mounted upon automatic rollers. Upon an elaborate rack, files of daily and weekly papers from all parts of the world were arranged. Aside from the desk occupied by my friend and a few chairs, the other furnishings of the inner office could best be described by the one word—"books."

Books were almost everywhere. Behind me was a cumbersome case of fat city directories—unbroken files of them extending back for ten years or more. A United States Dispensary rubbed sides with a row of old telephone lists. County and State atlases were flanked by shipping lists and guides. Dictionaries in many languages were there, as were statute books in creamy bindings of calf. Cable codes, commercial reports, and railway time-tables were in evidence—in fact, almost every conceivable kind of a book, with one exception—a work of fiction.

The last visitor having departed, my observations were interrupted by Parr.

"I think the Bureau can get along without me now for an hour or so," he said.

With the old familiar whisper, "Savarin's," to a man in the outer office, my friend led the way to the express elevator.

AS WE finished our lunch I commented upon Parr's equipment of books and maps. He smiled as he reached for the matches.

"I'd rather have a battery of books than a thousand pairs of false whiskers," he laughed between puffs. The detectives that get the money nowadays are the ones who couple their powers of observation with their other faculties. Hard work and good office equipment bring home the bacon. Then, of course, good luck enters into the proposition. Fortunately for me, I've always had a fair amount of good luck."

"Have you ever failed on a case?" I inquired.

"Not yet," was the astonishing reply. "So far, I'm one of these 100-per-cent men; although I may fall down on a case tomorrow for all I know."

I pondered. What manner of man was this who could thus calmly assert that for five long years he had been dealing daily with knotty problems, and had yet to experience his first defeat? True, I knew of the cases where he had been retained by the Federal Government; the case of the gray-eyed English widow was still fresh in my memory; and the affair of the one-legged fugitive from justice was not of long standing. These, one and all, were to Parr's credit; yet, I reflected, was the day never to come when he should be compelled to eat humble pie?

I resolved to watch and wait, alert for the first difficult problem to present itself. I was determined to make Godfrey Parr acknowledge himself defeated for once, even if I were obliged to pay for his services out of my own pocket.

Singularly enough, the opportunity to test the man-hunter's abilities presented itself the very next morning.

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II

WHILE breakfasting I noticed that the morning papers gave considerable space to an account of the body of an unknown person which had drifted ashore at Manhattan Beach the previous evening. *The Daily Earth* told the story as follows:

BATHERS IN A PANIC

MERRYMAKERS TAKING A MOONLIGHT DIP AT MANHATTAN BEACH DISCOVER A DEAD BODY IN THE MIDST OF THEIR PARTY.

CLAD IN PAJAMAS, WEARING A MONEY-BELT CONTAINING LARGE SUM OF ENGLISH MONEY, LATEST MYSTERY OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC IS BORNE ASHORE BY THE TIDE.

Floating face upward, a pajama-clad body drifted into the midst of a party who were bathing by moonlight at Manhattan Beach late last night. Responding to the screams of some of the women bathers, Life-Saver Moody soon had the ghastly object laid out on the beach.

After the body had been removed to the morgue, it was learned that a large sum in English bank-notes was found strapped tightly around the waist in a money-belt of chamois. The pajamas bore no mark, nor is there any hope of identifying the remains unless it be accomplished through the clues afforded by the money and a pair of crossed flags tattooed upon the left forearm. The body bore no marks of violence. Acting upon the supposition that the remains are those of an Englishman, the British consul-general has been notified.

Cutting the article out of the *Earth*, I lost no time in making my way to the headquarters of The International Bureau. I had an idea. I proposed to retain Parr; to hire him to identify the remains of the unfortunate; and unless he should succeed within a reasonable time, to give him the laugh, and to compel him to acknowledge that he was no longer "a 100-per-cent man."

"Here's a case for you, Mr. Detective," was my greeting as I entered Parr's inner room and handed him the clipping.

Briefly scanning the article, he laid it on his desk and turned to me.

"It seems to be in my line," he observed, "but as I haven't been retained I can't very well take the initiative. It's barely possible that the consul-general will ask me to give my attention to the case. I've done business with him before. It looks like an easy nut to crack, though; a question of hours instead of days in which to get an answer."

"How much does it cost to retain you?" I asked, in pursuance of my plan to force the man to take up a hard case.

"My regular charges are a hundred dollars per day and expenses," he replied.

I felt for my check-book. Parr smiled.

"I fancy I see your game," he ventured. "You wish to retain me yourself? In other words, it's a kind of a bet."

I nodded and produced the check-book, while Parr glanced through some telegrams awaiting his attention.

"It'll take me about five minutes to clear these up," he said, looking up from one of them, "then I'll be at your service. Meanwhile, you may as well make out a check for the retainer. I don't gamble, but I tell you what I'm willing to do. If I fail to learn the manner in which that man came to his death, his full name and station in life, I'll turn over your check to the Fresh Air Fund, together with one of my own for a thousand. Furthermore, I agree to put the lawful heirs in the way of possessing themselves of the bank-notes—all this *before the close of the present business day!*"

I listened to the seeming braggart in amazement, and then wrote out my check for a hundred. Parr busied himself with his telegrams, a code-book at his elbow. Finally, he pressed a button communicating with a buzzer in the outer office. A subordinate appeared and the detective handed him the telegrams.

"All routine," he commented tersely. "File them at your leisure, but bring me to-day's *City Record* at once."

TURNING to a certain page of the bulky municipal daily, Parr gave his close attention to a paragraph. For some minutes he studied it, then he clipped it from the page and handed it to me. Wondering what connection could possibly exist between the *City Record* and the Manhattan Beach affair, I accepted the slip of printed matter and was quickly enlightened by reading the following:

No. 7228. Male body, 35 to 38. 5 ft. 10 in. d'k br. hair. Slightly bald at temples. Long l't br. mustache. Gray eyes. Crossed pennants 2½ x 4½ with crown and figure 5 tattooed in red and green upon the left forearm. Face deeply tanned, but with peculiar white line extending from in front of r't ear to lower lip, and from thence up l't side of face to point before l't ear. A l't upper bicuspid gold-capped. Two lower r't molars missing.

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Loose blouse and pantaloons, (evidently pajamas) only garments. Letter 'R' embr'd in silk inside neckband of blouse. Chamois money-belt strapped around waist containing envelope with undecipherable superscription, and 1,005 pounds in Bank of England notes. From Manhattan Beach, 8.30 P. M., 15th inst. In water 18 to 24 hours. Condition excellent. At Willoughby Street Morgue, Borough of Brooklyn.

"In these cases the *City Record* is always much more satisfactory than are the other daily papers," Parr went on to explain. "The *Record* is the official organ of the City of New York, and the morgue officials always telephone in an accurate description of the unidentified dead. It looks as if I'll have to go to Brooklyn, although I believe I could call the turn on this case without leaving the office."

Perplexed by the man-hunter's statement that he believed he could identify the body without leaving his headquarters, I accompanied him to the Bowling Green station of the subway. Never as yet had I heard him boast, but upon this occasion I thought that he was stretching the long bow a bit.

Parr's card secured our instant admission to the building in Willoughby Street; and a few moments after our entrance an attendant pulled out the zinc-lined receptacle from its refrigerating enclosure, and we looked upon the face of the dead.

Parr was at work in an instant. He examined the hands and finger nails; he looked at the teeth. He seemed to pay scant attention to the peculiar white line which encircled the face from ear to ear, running below the nether lip, but he studied the tattooing intently, producing his magnifying-glass for that purpose. He looked for a moment at the upper part of the right arm where three old vaccination-scars appeared. I noticed that the marks formed a triangle, and that their presence seemed to puzzle the detective.

"The mark of the 'Broad Arrow,' " I heard him say, in a low tone, as if speaking to himself.

He did not proceed to explain, however.

On a sheet spread over the body the half-clenched fist of the dead man rested, partly concealing a little heap of broken shell, together with two or three small gray pebbles.

"He must've fetched up against the bottom to get that handful," murmured the attendant, as Parr gave his attention to the significant objects. "That hand was closed when he was brought here," he added, "but now that the muscles are all relaxed it's open some."

Parr nodded, and then turned to the assistant keeper.

"I'd like to see the clothing, and the money-belt and its contents," he said.

FROM a heap of clothing—grim relics of the city's dead—the official drew two garments, unquestionably a suit of pajamas. Parr glanced at the initial "R" embroidered upon the neckband of the jacket, and laid the articles aside. Opening a safe, the assistant keeper then produced the money-belt. It was of chamois, unmarked, and just like a thousand others. Parr ran over the English bank-notes, examining them upon either side, but they bore no extraneous marks. There were eleven of them in all, ten of them of the hundred-pound denomination and one a five-pound note.

The envelope mentioned by the *Record* was empty and of the ordinary commercial size. It had been opened at the left end, and possibly one-eighth of it was missing. In the upper left-hand corner the printed letters "SING COFFEE," could be distinguished, and just beneath them the following characters: "ROW."

In some mysterious manner the salt water had acted upon the written superscription in such a way as to obliterate it, completely but had had no effect upon the postmark, "New York," and the waving cancellation lines. In one corner of a compartment in the money-belt—still damp from its immersion—a five-cent United States postage-stamp was discovered. Thus, according to my notion, Parr had but one clue upon which to base his investigation: the torn envelope, as shown in the sketch that follows. For I have always kept that torn envelope!

Thanking the assistant keeper and passing him a bank-note folded into small compass, Parr then headed for the street.

"Time is precious now," he remarked after a glance at his watch. "It's nearly three o'clock by London time, and I've got to cable."

Three minutes later found us seated in a taxicab, speeding across the old Brooklyn Bridge toward the headquarters of The International Bureau of Investigation.

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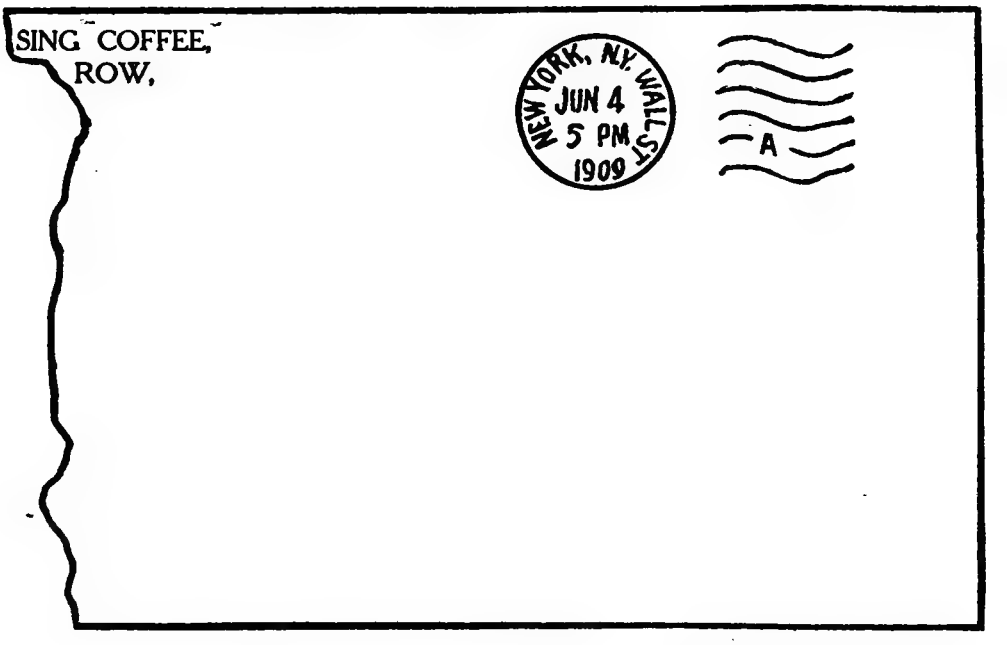

III

BACK at his office, Parr lost no time. His first move was to consult a chart of lower New York harbor. Next, he consulted some sailing lists. He then picked up his desk telephone and called for "Broad—6301."

"I'd like to speak with the chief of the statistical division—this is Godfrey Parr," I heard him say, after a brief interval.

"I'm calling up Ellis Island," the man-hunter explained to me in an aside while he waited for his party.

"Hello, Mr. Bunker?" he went on after a moment. "This is Parr—yes, Godfrey Parr. I wish you'd be kind enough to look at the first and second cabin manifests of the Blue Star liner *Calomania*, which reached port on the morning of the fifteenth instant, and give me the names of any passengers whose names have been crossed off, together with the reason."

A silence lasting several minutes ensued, and then Parr raised his eyebrows as he repeated into the transmitter:

"First-cabin passenger named A. Major you say? Missing at dock—no occupation—no American address. Thank you, Bunker. Good-by."

Hanging up the receiver, the detective next busied himself with various books and pamphlets. He then wrote a cablegram, and rang for a messenger. Scarcely had the door closed behind the departing youth before Parr had the superintendent of the cable-company on the wire, and requested that he be favored with quick and accurate work.

"You see, there's a thousand dollars at stake," Parr observed as he turned to me, a twinkle in his eyes. "We may as well go to lunch now," he added. "I can do nothing more until I hear from London, although the case is nearly complete as it is. I'll tell you more about it as we eat."

Mystified by his words, I did poor justice to my *filet Bordelaise* I fear, and Parr tantalized me still further by keeping me waiting until our coffee was poured, and our *brevas* afire. His first words seemed to deepen the mystery.

"The problem has been a very simple one," he began. "Several contingencies might have delayed the solution, however. For instance: To-day might have been a bank-holiday in England. In that event I dare say my London agent would have closed shop for the afternoon. He and his staff have been working hard of late.

"The description in the *City Record* put me in a position to draw some fairly accurate inferences. Even before leaving the office I might have told you the man's

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station in life. In all probability, aided by the initial upon the pajama jacket, I might have been able to tell you his name, and give you further details concerning his professional career.

"The time was short, however, and I wished to see for myself. Hence our trip to the morgue, although I could have sworn that the remains were those of a major in His Britannic Majesty's Fifth Regiment of Royal Irish Lancers, and that he had just returned to England after a considerable period of foreign service—probably spent in India.

"After our return to the office, my deductions having been corroborated at the morgue, I was in possession of additional data. I learned his name. I learned that he had been granted a six months' furlough, with permission to cross the seas. I learned that he had been shipped home from India, after a severe sunstroke; and ascertained that the second battalion of his regiment is still in garrison at Fort George, in the East Indian Province of Madras.

"Furthermore, I knew that he was a widower with one daughter. It is now my duty to locate that daughter, which I hope to be able to do after I hear from London. Her father is a suicide, having dived to his death before daybreak on the morning of the fifteenth, at a point on the east bank near the northerly turn of Ambrose Channel, *just two nautical miles southwest of Manhattan Beach!*"

PARR signaled to our waiter, and forestalled me in paying the score. While waiting for his change, he turned to me and made an impressive statement:

"The unfortunate guest of the city now lying over in Willoughby Street is none other than the Right Honorable Henry James Rolfe, a major, risen from the ranks. For some reason, not clear at present, he was traveling to New York upon the *Calomania* under the alias of 'A. Major.'"

"Tell me how you are so sure of all this," I urged.

Parr drummed thoughtfully upon the crown of his straw hat and smiled.

"Wait until we hear from London," he said. "Then you'll agree with me that it's been a ridiculously simple matter after all."

It was five o'clock, New York time, before we heard from London, and the contents of the cablegram seemed unsatisfactory to Parr. He read the message, pursed his lips, and then handed it to me. Its contents ran as follows:

GODPARR, NEWYORK:

Only daughter Major Rolfe married against father's wishes to John Earle. Reported widowed last month, working in restaurant Newyork. Rolfe acting queerly. Supposed sailed to States to meet daughter. Her address, Rolfe's steamer, both unknown. SAWYER.

"It looks very much as if I'm out the thousand," grumbled Parr as he looked up at the clock. "The girl is in New York most likely, but it's out of the question for me to locate her before the end of the business day. I may as well make out the check now, and get some advertisements ready."

Executing his personal check for one thousand dollars, Parr then placed it in an envelope together with my own for a hundred, which I had handed him that morning. He addressed the missive to the treasurer of the Children's Fresh Air Fund, sealed it, and tossed it into his "outgoing-mail" tray. He then gave his attention to the preparation of a personal advertisement for the morning papers, in which he requested that Mrs. John Earle, daughter of Major Henry J. Rolfe, call upon him at once.

As we made our way along Broadway and into Park Row, Parr asked me to wait a moment while he placed the advertisements with an agency. Loath to enter the office, which I perceived to be crowded, I tarried on the sidewalk, and gazed idly at a man in white cap and jacket, who was making wheat-cakes in the front window of a restaurant next door.

Parr came out of the advertising agency, stared at the restaurant window; and then to my surprise asked me what I called a New York business day.

"I suppose it begins at eight o'clock, and ends at six," I answered vaguely. "It's now half-past five; and if you locate the girl before six o'clock, I suppose you win, even if your check *has* been mailed. Why do you ask?"

"Simply because the answer to our riddle is on the window before us, in celluloid letters a foot high."

I looked at the window, and perceived that the establishment was one of the many

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Barnett Dairy Lunches; that is was "Closed on Sundays;" and that their specialty was, "Surpassing Coffee." Suddenly it came over me that we were in Park Row, and I thought of the printing on the envelope—a despised and neglected clue.

WE ENTERED the restaurant, and while I enjoyed the mottoes, "Feed My Lambs," "Where Will You Spend Eternity?" and "Not Responsible for Coats and Hats," Parr found the manager of the tiled sarcophagus, and a little later approached a trim figure in black. She was behind the cashier's desk, and seemed to be all big brown eyes and light brown hair. Briefly, the detective addressed her, and then he beckoned to me.

"I've found the girl," he said significantly. "Clarke," he went on, "I want to introduce you to Mrs. Earle, the daughter of Major Rolfe. Mrs. Earle, this is my friend, Mr. Bruce Clarke."

Wondering what it was all about, the woman in black acknowledged the introduction.

As gently, almost, as a woman could have done it, the man-hunter began to break the news to her. Somehow, I could not bear to listen. I waited on the sidewalk.

It was a quarter to six when Parr came out. He spoke almost gruffly to me.

"We'd better be on our way up-town," he said. "I've got a lot of telephoning to do. She's leaving everything to me. She's living with a kind-hearted Englishwoman who'll take care of her until she can see me to-morrow. She's now turning over her cash, and we're going to see her to her lodgings."

IV

WHEN Parr had finished his telephonic arrangements with one of the leading undertaking firms, we proceeded to our club and attempted to deceive each other by ordering an elaborate dinner. Neither of us ate much, however. I had no heart for billiards that night, and we sat late over our coffee, while Parr eased his feelings by telling me more about the case.

"The fact that a large sum of money in English bank-notes was found on the body led me to infer that it was the remains of an Englishman," he began. "Now, the English proletariat do not wear pajamas; neither do they go in for gold-crowned teeth—decent dentistry is still a luxury abroad—therefore I concluded that the man must have been a man of position. Of course the foregoing would apply to a defaulting bank clerk, or to a prosperous thief or gambler; therefore I had to take other facts into consideration.

"Englishmen of position, particularly members of the nobility and army and navy officers, have for years had a weakness for being tattooed with various designs. As a souvenir of a visit to Japan, during his younger days, the reigning English king bears a six-colored dragon on one of his arms. Naval officers favor designs such as anchors, fish, dragons and so on. Army officers go in more for flags, pennants and so forth. Therefore the crossed pennants indicated a cavalry regiment, and the figure '5' gave me the number of the regiment.

"The crown is the official mark of a major in the British army, so I was reasonably safe in thus determining the rank, more particularly as my magnifying-glass showed that the crown had been but recently pricked into the skin, and served to cover up two stars, the distinctive shoulder-strap ornaments of an English captain. I was thus led to believe that the man had been but recently promoted to his field rank.

"That he had not long since returned from foreign service under a hot sun was most plainly indicated by the white line around his face. English solders in tropic regions wear white helmets. While on duty, officers and men alike must wear their chin-straps down. The hot sun tans and burns the unshaded part of the face, and the white wale, covered by the chin-strap, shows up in startling relief, particularly in the cases of those light-complexioned persons who tan deeply and readily. Even after a soldier returns to England, the white line remains visible for months.

"One of the English 'bobby's' favorite tricks for obtaining the reward paid for the apprehension of deserters from His Majesty's army is to keep his eyes open for straight-backed men with white lines around their faces. If such a man can not produce his discharge-papers, he's in hot water.

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"My visit to the morgue was disconcerting in one respect, for I found what was apparently a contradictory clue. You recollect the vaccination-marks?"

"Yes," I said. "They formed a triangle, and you said something about the mark of the 'Broad Arrow'."

"That's the English way of branding a private soldier. You see, English army regulations expressly prohibit the marking or branding of a soldier, but they require that a private must be vaccinated immediately upon enlistment. For various reasons, such as preventing a man from deserting out of one regiment and enlisting in another, the authorities find it necessary that they should know a 'ranker' when he is stripped.

"So the surgeons kill two birds with one stone by making three incisions on the upper part of the right arm. Thus, the recruit is vaccinated—triply and painfully so—and at the same time he is marked for life. The triple mark approximates the sign of the 'Broad Arrow,' the three-cornered device with which the English brand and mark all government property.

"TO BE truthful, I was puzzled at first, as the clues indicated that the man was both a major and a private soldier. That couldn't be possible. Then the answer occurred to me: He had risen from the ranks!

"After returning to the office, the English Service Blue Book told me that there were but two majors in the Fifth Royal Irish Lancers whose family names began with the letter 'R.' One of them, Robling, was fifty-five years of age. Our man could scarcely have attained forty-five. The other major was the Right Honorable Henry James Rolfe, forty-four years of age, who had failed to pass the Sandhurst examination years before, and had subsequently enlisted as a private soldier.

"*The Broad Arrow Naval and Military Gazette* gave me additional particulars as to the promotions, sun-stroke, furlough and the like. My files are all indexed, you see, and it takes me but a very few moments to dig out what I want. The list of arriving steamships helped me to determine what ocean liner leaving an English port could have been within drifting distance of Manhattan Beach on the fifteenth of the month. Fortunately for my peace of mind there was only one, the *Calomania*.

"The statistical division at Ellis Island corroborated my theory to the extent that a first-class passenger was missing from that particular liner, and that he was traveling under an assumed name. The handful of broken shells and gray pebbles was doubly significant, inasmuch as it told me that Major Rolfe was a suicide, and indicated almost the exact spot where he dived over the side of the steamship."

"You'll have to explain," I interrupted.

"That's easy. If you'll take the large-scaled Coast Survey chart of New York bay and harbor—number 120, I believe—you'll see printed characters scattered all over its surface, such as 'crs gy S yl Sp,' and 'bu C gy P.' The first would indicate that the bottom of the harbor at that particular point consists of coarse gray sand containyellow specks. The second would mean 'blue clay and gray pebbles.' The hand of the dead man clutched some pieces of broken shell and three pebbles. The chart shows that only at one point within miles and miles of Manhattan Beach does this combination occur, and that's on the east bank of Ambrose Channel at the northerly bend. The notation on the chart reads: 'S P brk Sh.' That means 'sand, pebbles and broken shells.' The sand must have been washed out of his hand."

"But how do you gather that the man committed suicide?" I asked.

"People who get 'touched by the sun' while in India are rarely ever the same again—mentally I mean. This man had every reason to live, even if his daughter did not marry to his liking. If he'd simply fallen overboard he'd hardly have gone to the bottom before the life left him. He dived, intentionally, possibly with a weight of some kind; and what's more, he dived off the deck, because the port-holes on the Blue Star liners aren't big enough to permit the passage of the body of a man of his size. That dock fire, several years ago, demonstrated that.

"He must have gone on deck just before daybreak when the *Calomania* was creeping up to the Narrows. Unperceived, he leaped over the side, and swam for the bottom. Once there, he grabbed, and tried to hold on. The chart shows four and a half fathoms of water on that bank. The man *must* have been insane, otherwise he'd

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never have clutched at the bottom in that manner, nor would he have gone on deck dressed in his pajamas. Furthermore, if he were in his right mind, he wouldn't have taken passage under an alias. He had no reason to. His mind was unbalanced."

"Why was it that the Blue Star officials didn't notify the newspapers when they learned that a saloon passenger was missing?" I asked, in all simplicity.

"For the same reason that the manager of New York's newest and biggest hotel doesn't expect to telephone to the newspapers in the event that one of his passenger elevators should fall and kill a few guests."

PARR rose to his feet. The hour was late.

"I'm sorry for the daughter," he concluded. "We'd have missed finding her to-night if those 'Surpassing Coffee' letters hadn't fairly slapped me in the face. It only goes to bear out my statement that luck is quite a factor in detective work after all. I'm going to bed, old man. Good-night."

"Hold on a moment!" I called, thinking of his check. "You won the bet. You did what you set out to do within the space of a single business day. You'd better recall that check for the thousand. There's a postal ruling which permits you to have the letter returned to you unopened. You'd better wire the postmaster now."

"Clarke," said the detective, "I'm going to do nothing of the sort; the check goes through. I didn't stand to lose a penny, irrespective of which way the cat jumped. I'll explain. When I started my agency, about five years ago, I resolved not to become a mere money grubber. In the event that The International Bureau waxed prosperous, I promised myself that I would devote one-fourth of its gross income to some deserving charity. I've been contributing to the Fresh Air Fund for several seasons. It's a good cause. The check mailed this evening is merely a foretaste of what they'll get at the end of the month, after my books are balanced."

"And may your checks grow larger as the months roll by," I breathed, humbled and ashamed; for at last I had been brought to realize that Godfrey Parr was not only a smarter man, but a better man, than I.

Tomagno Tells a Tale

by S. B. Dinkelspiel

"YES," said the old salesman, as he bent forward to light his corncob, "the jewelry trade is built of odd characters and strange incidents. I have often wished that I had kept a pocket-book to jot down the stories I heard when I was on the road. That was before my leg went back on me and they gave me this job assorting stones and keeping a chair in the office polished."

It was Christmas week. We were open evenings for the occasional retailer or trader who might drop in to fill a late order.

"I have known men to beg us for a tray of collar buttons on memorandum. Years later they went abroad to do their own buying and considered themselves too strong to patronize us. Again I have known little chaps to borrow a hundred dollars and set up a watch counter in a drug-store. In five years they pay back the hundred dollars and then waste the

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rest of their life tinkering at elusive screws and rusted springs. Sometimes they never pay back the hundred."

The buzzer over the door sounded. The night watchman looked in.

"Michel Tomagno is in the hall," he said. "Will you see him?"

The old salesman nodded and then turned to me.

"Now you are going to see the queerest freak in the trade. Keep your eye on him. He is a klept——"

Tomagno entered.

"Gentlemen, good evening," he said. "I do not disturb you? Good! I must stay but a moment. I leave for Virginia City early in the morning, and must take a karat stone with me. Will you fix me up?"

The salesman entered the vault. The little old man sank into a deep chair and threw the tails of his shining cutaway over his knees. His silk hat he placed on the floor beneath his chair and twirled his tobacco-stained mustache.

"Frank," said the old salesman to me, as he appeared with a wallet of stones, "Signor Tomagno is the best story-teller since Boccaccio."

"You flatter me, monsieur," said Michel. "When a man lives as many years as I have, strange things must happen to him. It is fate."

"Especially when one has lived through a gold-rush!"

Tomagno's eyes sparkled.

"I must tell you of the trip I made from Nevada City to Colfax, with a sack of gold."

The salesman winked to me and handed Tomagno a cigar. The old Spaniard lit it, and then clutched his tweezers and began to pick over the package of stones.

"It was in 1856—or was it 57? It makes no difference. I was not a miner in those days. No, I let the other man do the work. I clerked in the Gold Exchange and drew my salary every week. It was a good business.

"During that year and for years previous, all the county had been terrorized by the daring escapades and sorties of one Pedro Garcia, a long-faced Mexican, and his gang of twenty cutthroats. Garcia was the most honest thief I have ever met. He would usually send a messenger to warn you before he came to rob you. He was so honest that we never could gather enough evidence to hang him. And his gang were slippery as twenty-dollar gold pieces.

"When Garcia wasn't holding some kid for ransom or blowing a safe—he never touched cattle—he was a good man to have around. He played a stiff, honest game of poker and could drink like a German. But let him know you were going across the country with a dollar in your pocket—and he always did manage to know it—then it were well to bid good-by to the dollar before you started."

I CAUGHT the old salesman's eye. He was writing on a slip of paper that he finally dropped at my feet. Tomagno was still examining the stones. I stooped and picked up the note.

"Keep your eye on him," it said.

I watched, but nothing happened.

"One night," continued Tomagno, "the cashier handed me a bag with twenty-five pounds of gold in it.

"'Take this dust to Rosenthal in Colfax,' he said, 'and look out for Garcia. You had better follow the Green Snake Trail. They want the stuff early in the morning.'

"I took the dust to my room and threw it under my bed. Then I went to the White Palace and found Garcia shooting crap. I called him into the back room and ordered drinks. I had made up my mind to take the bull by the horns.

"'Garcia,' I said, 'I am going to take twenty-five pounds of dust to Colfax to-night.'

"'I know it,' said Garcia.

"'I want you to promise me that your men will let me go through without interference.'

"'And if I don't promise?'

"'I lose my job—not that you care a ——, but—well it's up to you. You are a strong man in these parts and can afford to be generous.'

"Garcia bit off a piece of tobacco and then put out his hand.

"'The boys are eight miles away,' he said, 'but I will fix it somehow.'

"Then we had another drink and Garcia went back to his game.

"I started at sunset. The day was at its coolest then and the mosquitoes not so bad. The bag of gold hung from my

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pommel and bounced against my legs. The road was quite deserted. I met no one save a Spanish monk, astride a burro, about two miles out of town. He was humming a merry tune and smiled as I trotted up.

"'*Buena sera*, father,' said I.

"'*Buena sera*, son,' he answered.

"We rode a couple of miles together without speaking. It was the way of the road. From time to time, the monk would comb his white beard with his fingers and stick his heels into the donkey's belly. The night grew dark. The moon came up yellow, like a cloudy topaz. We heard a coyote chattering in the manzanita. Then a bird whistled.

"The monk turned to listen.

"'What was that?' he asked.

"The whistle was repeated, a low, mournful call. Then out of the darkness came a group of shapes. My hand dropped to my gun.

"'None of that,' called a voice.

"I knew it was useless to put up a fight, and so reined in my horse.

"'—— you, Garcia,' I said. 'I suppose you are there some place.'

"Then I apologized to the monk for swearing.

"'Hand over the gold, Tomagno,' said the Mexican who held my bridle. 'And you there,' he turned to the monk, 'climb down from your elephant.'

"'Go to ——,' said the monk and then humbly apologized to me for the oath.

"We climbed down.

"'Is Garcia here?' I asked of the leader.

"'What if he is,' said the Mexican.

"'He promised—' I said.

"Then a gag was thrust between my teeth and I was tied and thrown to the ground. I lay on my side and watched the monk. He stuck his hand into his cassock and drew out an ebony cross.

"'Our Father—' he said and bowed his head.

"The Mexican's eyes became white.

"'The cross! Where did you get it?' he demanded.

"'Ha! The cross!' And then, gentlemen, picture my amazement when the little monk shouted, 'Where did I get it? You dirty dog!'

"And then he fell to kicking the Mexican in the stomach. I expected to see the little old man mobbed by the dozen followers. To my surprise they all turned and fled into the brush with their leader after them, holding his hands over his sore ribs and moaning.

"Then the monk laughed and cut my ropes.

"'The boys know how to tie a knot,' he said and drew out a red bandana to wipe his perspiring forehead. Then he laughed again.

"'These —— things are enough to bury a man,' said he, and pulling off the white beard, Garcia smiled at me!

"Well, I uncorked my flask and we had a pull of gin, and then Garcia escorted me, with pomp and much firing of revolvers, into Colfax, and Rosenthal got his gold."

II

I LAUGHED, the old salesman laughed, and Tomagno was pleased. Finally he lay aside a stone and asked my senior to weigh it. The salesman stepped into the inner office and stood with his back to us. He returned in a moment.

"A karat and a sixty-fourth," he said. "That will be $182.80."

"I'll pay you for it," said Tomagno. "Take off my discount, please."

He drew out a fat pocket-book. The money was put away and a receipt given to the trader. He arose.

"Gentlemen," he said, "good night. I must thank you for a most profitable hour. I have enjoyed your good cigar and talked about myself. We old men all like to tell stories when they have to do with us. Once more, good night."

He turned, swept his silk hat with his sleeve, and walked to the door. The old salesman held it open for him. Tomagno passed out—the salesman started to close it and then opened it again.

"Signor Tomagno," he called after the retreating figure, "shall I charge those half-karat stones to you?"

There was absolute silence for a moment and then a voice called, "Yes," from out of the darkness and the salesman closed the door.

He returned with a smile upon his face.

"A most profitable evening," he mocked. "We have smoked a good cigar and enjoyed a good story. We have sold a stone for a hundred and eighty-two dollars, and a package of half-karats for six hundred."

"What do you mean?"

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"Simply, that when Garcia's foot landed in the Mexican's abdomen, Tomagno's sleeve got entangled in a package of half-karats and they fell into his silk hat. Tomagno is a rich man. Also he is the cleverest kleptomaniac in the West. He really enjoys the excitement tremendously. So does his wife, by the way."

The salesman swung the vault-doors shut, and we put up the screens and went home.

A Low-Veldt Funeral

An Account of a Personal Experience in East Africa

by Talbot Mundy

THERE is a generally accepted belief that a funeral at sea is the most solemn and impressive rite that can be witnessed. I have seen many of them, and beyond doubt the act of consigning a comrade's body to the deep plucks at a very tender cord in even the wildest man's emotional system. But I attended a funeral once that was more impressive even than a 'board-ship one.

There were only five of us who took an active part in it; the sixth man, whom we buried, was Billy Ross. We buried him ten feet deep in the only piece of firm ground we could find among the swamps to the south of the Wakisumu country—and that lies south of Emin Pasha Gulf, which forms the southwest shores of Victoria Nyanza. During certain seasons of the year you can wade waist-deep in that part of the world through ooze and stinking water for days at a time, and you are lucky if you can find a tree to camp in.

All of the party except myself were Australians; the others were all of about the same age, all of them came from somewhere near Perth, and they had knocked about together since they were boys, taking the ups and downs of life with a grin and sticking steadfastly to the unwritten law of the Australian Bushman—"share and share alike."

They were "one for all, and all for one" through thick and thin; they all enlisted in the first contingent of Australian cavalry, and went through the war in the same troop; and when the war was over they all took their discharge in Africa and set out to try their luck in that misbegotten continent. They had no luck, but the fact never once discouraged them.

If you were unfortunate enough to make an enemy of one of them, you had to fight the lot, and each of them could thrash two ordinary men. I had the good fortune to make friends with "Snowy" Annetts, and the other four accepted me promptly as a

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comrade; their friendship was as honest and unreserved and enduring as their enmity.

We were all hard up—desperately hard up—but we all of us had rifles and ammunition, and I had a good-sized tent and some provisions. I invited them to make use of what I had, and in return they invited me to join their projected expedition across the marshes. The expedition had no particular object except to see what we might see and to try whether a "bow drawn at a venture" might not change the luck.

THE LUCK OF THE SWAMP LAND

BUT the luck seemed worse than ever. We managed to shoot a few crocodiles, but there was no market for the skins, or none worth speaking of. Once we got a hippopotamus, and his carcass fed us and our retinue of boys for a while; but the provisions gave out before long, and there was mighty little edible game in that swamp. To make matters worse, we all began to grow sick from constant wading. Even our natives went sick, and before long all but three of them bolted, and there was no one left to carry our tent and spare ammunition and cooking-pots and things. We had our choice between staying where we were or abandoning all we had and returning to our starting-point more broke than ever.

They were die-hards, those Australians—men who had never confessed themselves beaten in their lives, and never intended to. They elected to camp right there in the swamp on the off chance of something unexpected turning up. They reasoned that things could not possibly be worse, that there was nothing where we had come from worth going back for, and that there might be something worth trying for ahead. Their pluck and determination had such an effect on me that I elected to stay with them and take my chance. Fortunately we found a piece of ground high and dry above the swamp; it was about sixty or seventy yards square, and thickly wooded. We set our three remaining boys to clearing a space on it, and there we pitched our tent and held a council to try and think out some sort of plan for the future.

WHO WILL GO?

THE first consideration was food, and we drew lots to decide who should be the first to go hunting. Billy Ross drew the shortest stick, and he went off due east without a word, taking one of our three boys with him. About an hour after he had left we heard the crack of his rifle in the distance, and assuming that he had shot something—for Billy seldom wasted cartridges—we started to make a fire, no easy proposition with the sodden wood at our disposal. When the fire was going well we sat down and smoked and waited; we waited until long into the afternoon, but there was no sign of Billy.

Then, somewhere about half past three, it must have been, we heard his rifle again a long way off; then another shot, and then another. We reasoned that Billy must have struck dry land, for it was unbelievable that such a steady shot as he was should need three cartridges to kill one of anything; and unless he had found dry land, it was highly improbable that he had found more than one thing to shoot at. Presently it occurred to Snowy Annetts to count the cartridges in the box, and on the top of the cartridges the first thing he found was Billy's bandoleer.

"He only filled his magazine," said Snowy. "All he's got with him is seven cartridges; he's used up four of them—now listen!"

THE SEVENTH SHOT

WE ALL sat still, even putting out our pipes and forgetting to slap at the mosquitoes. Before long we heard three more shots from Billy's rifle in rapid succession.

"He's either mad," said Annetts, "or else he's in some sort of trouble. Billy wouldn't use his last cartridge just to shoot meat with when he'd shot lots already. He knows the meat won't keep. Maybe there's a buffalo got after him, or—say, supposin' it's niggers! If he's struck dry land there'll be niggers sure as fate, and there's some durned bad niggers in this country! We'd better go and look."

We wasted no time answering him. All five of us seized our rifles and bandoleers and plunged into the swamp. We waded through it for about fifteen minutes before anything happened, and then we saw a native wading and slipping and stumbling along toward us.

As he drew nearer we saw that he was Billy Ross's boy; he was waving his arms excitedly, and he had part of his head-cloth

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wrapped round his forearm as though he were injured. He was too frightened and exhausted to speak when we reached him, but it was quite evident that something was seriously wrong and he must be made to speak. Snowy Annetts attended to that with the buckle-end of his belt, and the boy found his tongue again in short order.

THE FIGHT IN THE CLEARING

HE SAID that Billy Ross was dead—natives had killed him—he had been speared in the arm himself and had run away. He refused point-blank to go back again and show us where Ross was, but Annetts plied the belt to some purpose, and he changed his mind again before the buckle had bitten into him three times.

So we started off again with the boy in front of us, and far sooner than we expected we came to firm, dry land; it was thickly wooded, but here and there were clear spaces, and the boy pointed to one of these the moment we came in sight of it. He refused to go a step further, even when Annetts pointed a rifle at him, so we left him where he was.

There were natives in the clearing he had pointed to; they were coal-black and practically naked, but all of them were armed with spears, and we could see long before we reached them that they were excited. They seemed to be attacking something or some one. I knelt down, and fired one shot over their heads; that scared a few of them, but the rest took not the slightest notice.

"Shoot to kill!" said Snowy, and from then on we did.

We were taking a chance, of course; they might not be attacking Ross, and we might be committing murder, but as it turned out we were right, and I don't think any one would have blamed us very much if we had not been. We had reasonable grounds for suspicion, and had they been innocent or harmless niggers they would have almost certainly stopped what they were doing when my first bullet whistled above their heads.

We fired about six rounds each, and did enough damage to take the ginger out of them. They began to run, and the moment they scattered we caught sight of Billy Ross with his back against a tree; he had been fighting with the butt-end of his rifle and was very nearly "all in." He fell before we reached him—unconscious from loss of blood.

How long he had stood off those natives with the butt-end of his rifle we never knew, for he never regained consciousness sufficiently to tell us, and the boy's account was different each time we questioned him; but Billy surely had put up a fight. We found the bodies of four men he had brained, but he probably killed a lot more than that, for we saw the natives carrying away some bodies with them as they ran.

THE PASSING OF BILLY ROSS

SO FAR as we were concerned the worst part of the business was ahead of us. We hardly dared stay where we were and have our tent and the other things brought to us, for it was extremely probable that the natives would try to retaliate when night came on. So we had to carry poor old Billy back through the swamp to our island. It wasn't easy, for he weighed nearly two hundred pounds, and it wasn't good for Billy, for he bled. We got him there at last, and fixed him up as well as we could; but Billy had fought his last fight. A doctor might have saved him, though I doubt it. He died the following morning almost exactly at daybreak.

We refused to let our three boys do a thing for him. We dug the grave ourselves, hacking out the tree roots with axes, and burrowing chiefly with our hands; it took us all day to get down ten feet. Then when the moon rose we lowered Billy into it, with his feet toward Australia, and the scene that followed left a deeper impression on me than anything else I have ever witnessed.

I stood back from the grave-side, for, after all, I was only an interloper, a member of the party by courtesy, and not really one of them at all. These men had lived together since they were boys; knew one another's most intimate thoughts as they knew their own; had fought for one another and side by side in the same troop for their Queen and Country. They were burying a man who had been far more than a brother to them: he had been a tried, true comrade for twenty years. So when I had helped them lower Billy into his grave, I stood aside.

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THE PRAYER FOR THE PAL THAT WAS

SNOWY ANNETTS stood at the grave-head—a big, lean, lithe, deep-chested man with the moonlight silvering his iron-gray hair; his sleeves rolled up to the elbows, showed a pair of forearms that would have done credit to a Hercules. He crossed his wrists behind him, probably in subconscious memory of his school-days, but his huge, gnarled, knotted fists were clenched and there was nothing nervous in his attitude.

He stood with his head up, staring straight into the moonlight, and the others stood still on either side of the grave and waited. There was nothing prearranged about what followed; I know that because I had been with them all the time, and not one word had been said about a funeral service, or even about the grave. The grave had been dug in silence, each man relieving the other in turn, and working as he saw fit.

All at once Annetts drew a deep breath, took one step nearer to the grave, looked down into it and then up again straight into the moonlight; then he prayed—a rather illiterate prayer, but certainly the most impressive one I ever listened to.

"Oh, God," he said, "this here man Billy Ross was a good scout. He never went back on his chums nor robbed a woman. Moreover he put up a good fight, and died game. Treat him square! Amen."

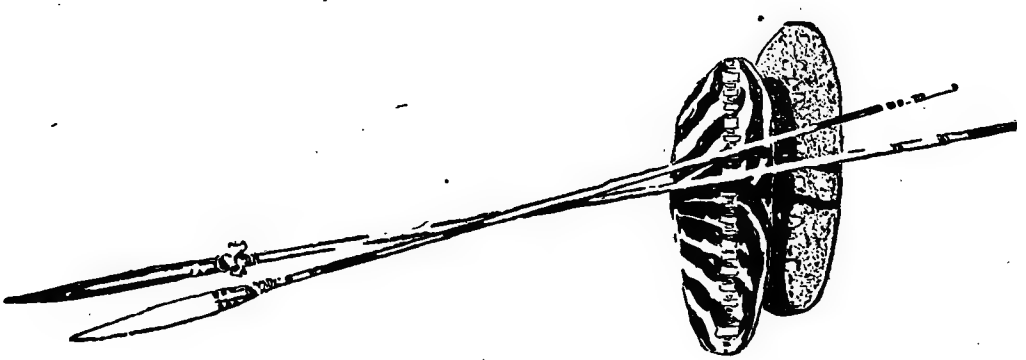
When his deep bass voice had finished there was silence, broken only by the million tiny voices of the night that blend together in the tropics into a most awful stillness. Not a word was spoken while his grave was filled.

We sat down afterward and smoked in silence, watching the sparks that flew upward from the fires we lit around his grave to ward off hyenas. No one slept, and yet not a word was spoken until daybreak. I don't know what the others thought about; I was thinking I would almost like to die if a friend of mine would say a prayer like that for me.

My thoughts were interrupted by Snowy Annetts. As the sun jumped up above the sky-line he knocked the ashes from his pipe and rose to his feet.

"It's time we burned that village," he remarked quietly.

We burned it.



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The Black Violin

by

Nevil G. Henshaw

CHAPTER I

MONSIEUR SUC

IT WAS a very little shop, dark and gloomy, and set far back in a neglected corner of the rue Bourbon. Visitors seldom found it unless they were directed to it from their hotels, but those who lived in the city knew it as the one place where they could find the most curious, the most ancient, and the most fascinating things in all the world.

Behind its iron-barred window ever lay a varied assortment of curios, for this shop was a veritable whirlpool into which was drawn all that was rare and valuable from the four corners of the earth.

Here was a clock, long and heavy and fashioned from bronze into a most beautiful design. A gift for a king, you would say, and you would not miss it far, since it was a gift of a king, sent many years ago to some proud Creole madame, as a token of gratitude from the poor school-teacher who had become Louis Philippe. Here was an ancient pistol, inlaid with gold and mother-of-pearl—the very weapon that had so often preserved the life of the great Lafitte. Here was a snuff-box of tortoise-shell that had once been the property of the Marquis de—but stay. You could appreciate these treasures only by seeing them.

There was no sign above the shop to herald these marvels; indeed, once you saw them you did not think of one. But had you looked very closely you would have seen upon the right-hand side of the door a small plate of brass. Upon this plate was carefully engraved:

MAURICE SUC

ANTIQUES AND CURIOS

— an inscription that was dignified and at the same time harmonious.

As for Monsieur Suc himself, he was almost as old and as curious as his wares. He was a small man, white and frail, with the delicate frailness of old porcelain, and his manners were those of the courtiers of ancient France.

When you came to the shop to make a purchase he would greet you with a bow worthy of a duke, and in a moment you would feel your superiority over the frail little figure before you. Indeed, when you gazed into his pale blue eyes and saw their look of hopeful pleading, you felt that you were fairly robbing him in paying him the generous prices that he always asked.

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But should you go to Monsieur Suc with something that you wished to sell, then there would be a difference. He would be none the less polite, but it would be a different kind of politeness—a brusker, a more businesslike sort of politeness, that plainly said:

"You need not think that because I am glad to see you I am going to let you get the better of me."

And his eyes would be different also. No longer would they be pale and pleading. Instead they would rather shine with a sudden acuteness of perception or set themselves in a look of unchangeable determination.

So it will be seen at the outset that Monsieur Suc was a master of the business that he had chosen in life.

ALL day long Monsieur Suc sat in an old armchair behind his counter, a monstrous volume of Froissart upon his knees, and a huge pair of black spectacles upon his nose, while he read of the glories of ancient France. Some said that he would write a history one day—a great history of the French—and others said that he read only that he might give some fictitious story to his wares and thus increase their value.

But, however it was, Monsieur Suc did not allow his reading to interfere with his business, for immediately upon the arrival of customers the great book would be closed, and would be laid aside until they had gone.

After he had locked up the shop for the night, Monsieur Suc would place his Froissart beneath his arm and would retire to his rooms in the rear. There were three of them opening out on to a courtyard—a living-room, his bedroom and, last of all, the room of little Lucie, his niece.

Monsieur Suc was very fond of Lucie, for she was his only near relative, and she in return loved her uncle as she would have loved her own father. She was very small and very pretty, with the bright, piquant prettiness of the Creole, and her fresh, young beauty stood out among the faded curios like some new-plucked bud amid a jar of withered roses.

And so Monsieur Suc lived very happily with his curios, his Froissart, and his little Lucie. All loved him, all respected him, from the little tailor on the corner who set his watch each morning by the clock of Louis Philippe, to the curé of the Chapel of the Virgin, upon whose altar stood a gift of two priceless candelabra.

And then one morning Monsieur Suc awoke to face a terrible suspicion.

Two weeks later he was branded a sorcerer—a wizard casting spells of death. But that was after he had bought the black violin.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF THE VIOLIN

THE violin came to Monsieur Suc early one morning, wrapped in a twist of newspaper, and heralded by a tale that was of a piece with its baleful influence in the future. It was brought by Madame Clotilde who kept the boarding-house upon the next block; fat, placid, Madame Clotilde whose good nature was a byword among all who knew her. Now, however, she was in a state of that uncontrollable anger which is caused by a hurt to one's pocket. Striding ponderously into the shop, she cast her package upon the counter and burst into a torrent of French.

"Behold, M'sieu Suc!" she cried. "Behold the reward that I receive for a month of labor. Look upon this violin of the devil and tell me its worth. And little enough it will be, I am sure. Name of God, is it for such things as this that I must work until I die of old age? Ha, the *vaurien*, the cheat! Consider a man, M'sieu Suc, who will cheat a poor old woman, even though it costs his life to do so."

Monsieur Suc closed his Froissart and carefully laid it upon the counter while his face assumed the expression of determination with which he always surveyed a possible purchase. Picking up the package, he withdrew the protecting newspaper, and the look of determination gave place to one of sudden wonder, for never had he seen such an instrument before.

The violin was one of the larger of the ancient models, and it was black—a deep, glossy black that seemed almost to pulse and glow in the half-light of the little shop—a black that was only intensified by the lighter shade of the little, dark-centered dots with which the instrument's upper edge was inlaid. Its shape was perfect, its lines were unspeakably graceful, and its

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strings, when Monsieur Suc inadvertently touched them, gave forth a sound of exquisite depth and sweetness. But most remarkable of all was its head-piece, which in place of the usual scroll had been carved to the likeness of a grinning human skull.

TRULY it was a strange instrument, sinister yet beautiful, with an appearance of value that was far from being lost upon one so experienced in such wares as Monsieur Suc.

Resuming his look of determination, Monsieur Suc placed the violin upon the counter again.

"It is a freak, madame," said he. "A curious freak and therefore of uncertain value. Perhaps it is worth a great deal, perhaps nothing. Who knows? And where, may I ask, did you get it?"

Instantly Madame Clotilde burst into a torrent of protest, the more vehement because of its long delay.

"The instrument must be worth something," she said. It was all that she had in payment for a month's board, and she could not afford to be cheated. Yes, cheated, deliberately cheated, by a man who could not even turn honest when death was upon him. And the man? Who else should it be but the little Italian Toni, who played in the cafés and upon the excursion-boats? Yes, she knew that he had been nothing but a boy and he had been bright and handsome, but he had cheated her in the end.

For four weeks he had paid her nothing, and when she had asked him for her money the day before, he had promised her that she would be paid that very night—paid in full, with a month's board in advance. His luck had been bad for a long time, but the day before it had changed gloriously.

There had been an excursion, an excursion of fat men, and he and his comrades had played for them. All day they had played, yes, even the German airs that they hated, while the fat men had taken many drinks of beer. Then the hat had gone round and it had come back to them overflowing. There were even bills in it, dollar bills, and, wonder of wonders, a five-dollar one. Toni was to receive his share that morning. In only a short while he would return and pay her all.

SO MADAME CLOTILDE had let him go, and on the strength of his assurances she had even bought a new bonnet from Madame Thérèse, the milliner. And then Toni had returned late in the afternoon with a look of wonder in his eyes, holding the violin close to his breast.

When Madame Clotilde had asked him for her money, he had looked at her curiously, almost resentfully, like one who has been disturbed in some dream of happiness.

The money was gone, he had told her. He had spent it for the violin, the wonderful violin that he held in his arms. In all the world there was no other like it, for its music was as the voice of angels. In a day, a week, he would be famous and he would pay her a dozen times over. And then, paying no heed to her shrill denunciations, he had gone to his room, taking the violin with him.

All through the afternoon and far into the night he had played, and the boarders had made no objection, for never had they heard such music before.

It had been as Toni had said it would be—like the voice of angels.

In the morning, becoming alarmed at his absence from the breakfast-table, they had gone to his room, and they had found him lying dead upon the floor, with the violin still held in his lifeless hand.

It was very sad, it was true, but that was the way in which Madame Clotilde had become possessed of the violin, and Monsieur Suc must give her a good price for it or else she would be ruined.

Monsieur Suc listened to the story with the polite indifference of one well accustomed to such things, and when Madame Clotilde had finished, he named a price that caused her to shriek with indignation. Ten minutes later he effected a compromise and his customer departed, loudly lamenting at the proceeds from her sale.

Then Monsieur Suc took the violin and placed it in his window, where it quickly passed from his mind in the enjoyment of his Froissart.

CHAPTER III

JEAN EDWARDE

IT WAS not until late in the afternoon that Monsieur Suc thought of the violin again. Indeed, it is probable that

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he would scarcely have glanced at the instrument when closing the shop for the night had not Jean Edwarde, the violinist, noticed it in passing, and come inside for a closer inspection.

Jean Edwarde played in the orchestra of the French Opera. He was large, and strong, and very merry, and it was said by all that he was the finest musician in the city. Hard-hearted indeed was the man who could hold back his tears when he played the Marseillaise upon the Fourteenth of July.

Bustling loudly into the shop, Jean Edwarde seemed to fill the gloomy interior with a sudden warmth of happiness and good-fellowship.

"Good afternoon, M'sieu Suc," he cried cordially. "I see that you have a new violin in your window, a strange violin, M'sieu Suc. *Mon Dieu!* With its blackness and its head-piece it would make a fit instrument for the devil himself, and yet I'll wager you an absinthe that it has a tone all of its own. Ah, the shape, M'sieu Suc, the wonderful shape! That is where it lies. Let me see it, my friend, that I may draw a bow across its strings and prove to you the truth of what I have said."

Taking the violin from the window, Monsieur Suc passed it over the counter to Jean Edwarde. Then he found a bow and stood watching the violinist while he made his examination.

"I trust that you are right," said Monsieur Suc. "The finer the tone, the better the price that I shall get for it. *Voilà*, let us hear!"

But Jean Edwarde did not answer him. Holding the violin before his eyes he turned it slowly round and round, gazing lovingly at its beautiful lines and softly caressing its smooth, black shape. And as he did so it seemed to Monsieur Suc that the carven head-piece grinned at him with a horrid malevolence.

Suddenly Jean Edwarde tucked the violin beneath his chin and began to play, softly at first and then louder, while Monsieur Suc stared at him in silent fascination, for never in his life had he heard such music.

Little Toni had said that the music of the violin was like the voice of angels, and as Monsieur Suc listened, he thought that this was indeed true. And then thought he, "What sort of an angel can I mean?" For like the violin itself, the music, though beautiful, was sinister.

Louder and louder rose the melody; wailing, laughing, pleading, swelling forth into bursts of glorious sound; yet through it all there ran a faint, elusive note of diabolical beauty—a note like the laugh of a siren, entrancing, but unholy.

JEAN EDWARDE stopped playing as suddenly as he had begun and stood for a moment in silence, the violin hanging loosely in his hand. His jovial face was white and set, and on his brow twinkled tiny drops of perspiration. All the while, so it seemed to Monsieur Suc, the death's-head grinned with increasing malevolence.

"Well," gasped Jean Edwarde finally. "Well, M'sieu Suc, and what do you think of the tone of your violin now?"

Monsieur Suc gave a little start, like one coming out of a dream, and nodded approvingly.

"Glorious, glorious!" said he. "And there is no one save yourself who could have brought it out in such a manner. I have never heard such music before, and yet there was something about it that made me think of the very Evil One himself. Something that——"

He paused while his business instinct came back to him in a sudden wave of reproach. Could he, Monsieur Suc, be actually depreciating his own wares?

"Something that I have never heard in the tone of a violin before," said he in a different voice. "Something that should make this one of double value."

Jean Edwarde's face had now taken on its usual ruddy hue, and the hand with which he brushed the perspiration from his brow was steady again. But in his eyes there was a look of restless yearning that told of some deep emotion within.

"M'sieu Suc," said he, "I will not try to pretend that this instrument is not a valuable one. Also, I tell you that, although you have heard its tone, you can only very faintly understand its value. No, a thousand times no. It is such as I, a musician, a violinist, that can know and appreciate it. There is no other way than to hold it, living, singing, breathing with melody, and feel that you yourself have wakened it to life. And so you see, my friend, that I am an honest man, for I first tell you this and then ask your price."

"And believe me when I say that your

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honesty shall not go unrewarded," answered Monsieur Suc.

For a moment he thought, and then he named an amount that would have caused Madame Clotilde to bless the name of Toni had she received it.

Jean Edwarde nodded appreciatively.

"That is fair," said he. "In truth it is too little, yet it is a large sum for me. But I must have the violin, M'sieu Suc. I must have it and you must grant me a favor. As you can well understand, I can not pay for it now, and I know that it is against your rule to give one credit. Therefore I ask that you will put the violin away until I am able to buy it. In three months, in two perhaps, I shall be ready, for I will work hard. I will play in the cafés in the mornings; I will even teach music, yes, I, Jean Edwarde. But I must have the violin, and you, M'sieu Suc, must keep it for me."

THERE was a look, half of resolve, half of pleading, in Jean Edwarde's eyes that caused Monsieur Suc to raise his hands with a gesture of wonder.

"*Mon Dieu!* you musicians!" he sighed. "You are a strange lot. And so you would do all these things for the possession of an old black fiddle? *Bien*, so it shall be, Jean Edwarde. You are my friend and I like you. Therefore I give you my promise that the violin shall be laid away until you have bought it or it has become impossible for you to do so. See, I will attend to the matter at once."

And then, blandly waving aside Jean Edwarde's vehement expressions of gratitude, he bowed him politely to the door.

AFTER the violinist had gone, Monsieur Suc returned to his Froissart, but he did not read with his usual intentness. Instead, he paused again and again to raise his head and look about him, and each time his gaze would finally rest upon the drawer behind the counter. Finally he closed his book and sat for a while staring thoughtfully before him.

"Such a tone!" said he softly to himself. "Such a beautiful tone, and yet there was about it something as of the very Evil One himself. And the price? Ah, but I have made a profit this day. I must tell Lucie."

Rising with an agility surprising in one of his years, he rang a little antique bell upon the counter, and then stood waiting for his niece, his face radiant at the thought of his good fortune.

Presently Lucie came from the rooms in the rear, and at sight of his look of satisfaction her face became radiant also.

"Ah, you have some good news, Uncle Maurice," said she, gaily, in French. "I can see it in your eyes."

"Yes," replied Monsieur Suc, "I have made a large profit to-day, and upon the old violin that you thought so terrible. Think of it, Lucie: I have not had it a day and Jean Edwarde has promised me a price that will make you open your eyes in amazement! And when it is paid there shall be a present for you also. Consider now the coral necklace at Monsieur Lapet, the jeweler's. How would it look about your pretty neck, little one?"

And in this spirit of good humor Monsieur Suc continued throughout the rest of the day, becoming so enthusiastic at his supper that his niece was emboldened to speak to him of her engagement to Paul, the son of Monsieur Benoir, who kept the restaurant upon the rue Royale.

But in this matter her uncle, for all his high spirits, was not to be turned. He did not wish to lose his little Lucie.

"What?" he cried. "Have you then become greedy? Would you have Paul and the necklace also? But no—things must come one at a time. First the necklace and then Paul. When I have sold another violin, you may speak to me of the matter again."

And there the matter ended.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEWS OF P'TIT JOE

MONSIEUR SUC opened his shop a little earlier than usual the following morning, for his Froissart had been sadly neglected the day before. Hurrying through his breakfast, he went directly to the armchair behind the counter, and there he read with redoubled energy until P'tit Joe came in to set his watch by the clock of Louis Philippe.

Every morning for years P'tit Joe had done this, and when people asked him his reason for doing so, he would reply,

"Why do I do it, do you ask? Is it not something for one to have the time of a

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King of France? But no, such as you can not understand."

So accustomed had Monsieur Suc become to this habit of the little tailor's, that he often failed to notice that he had come and gone. But on this particular morning P'tit Joe committed the unpardonable rudeness of disturbing Monsieur Suc in his reading.

Having compared his huge silver watch with the relic of Louis Philippe, the little tailor gave an apologetic cough and leaned over the counter.

"It is too bad, M'sieu Suc, is it not?" he asked in a tone more pleading than conversational.

Monsieur Suc raised his head and looked at P'tit Joe for a full minute in silence.

"What do you mean?" he finally asked in turn.

There was no annoyance in his look, his tone was gentleness itself, yet the simple question carried with it a greater rebuke than would have been found in the loudest of denunciations.

P'tit Joe turned as if to beat a hasty retreat.

"Pardon, m'sieu," said he hurriedly, "I did not mean to disturb you. I spoke of Jean Edwarde, that is all."

"And what of him?" asked Monsieur Suc, closing his book with a finger between the pages as though he expected to return to it in a moment.

At this question P'tit Joe turned back to the counter, his face aglow with that peculiar satisfaction which some people feel at the bearing of ill news. So Monsieur Suc did not know. This was indeed unlooked for.

"Jean Edwarde is dead!" said he.

With a cry, Monsieur Suc sprang to his feet, dropping the Froissart heavily to the floor.

"Dead?" he gasped. "Jean Edwarde dead? No, no, P'tit Joe, you can not mean it!"

P'tit Joe leaned easily against the counter. He had caused a sensation and he meant to make the most of it.

"But he is," said he. "As dead as Napoleon. And his wife—the little Olive! Ah, m'sieu, it is pitiful. She weeps and tears her hair and calls upon God to give him back again. It is enough to break one's heart to watch her. And the affair is so mysterious. Well and strong he went to bed last night, and when Olive tried to wake him this morning, there he lay dead beside her. The doctors say that it was the heart. I thought that you had heard of it."

Monsieur Suc seemed dazed.

"No," said he, "I had not." And then again, "I had not."

"Well, it is a bad affair," chattered P'tit Joe. "Here am I with a dress-coat half made that he might have it this week for the opera, and he is so large that I will never be able to find another who can wear it. But I do not care. If it was finished, I would present it to the little Olive that she might bury him in it."

And wiping his eyes, the kind-hearted little tailor went his way, grieving for his friend, yet pleased that he had been the first one to tell the news to Monsieur Suc.

LONG after he had gone, Monsieur Suc sat lost in thought, his Froissart lying unheeded at his feet. So Jean Edwarde was dead. Big, jolly, honest Jean Edwarde, who had been the pride of all who knew him. Why, it was only the day before that he had been in the shop to see the black violin, to have it put away until the time when he could pay for it. And now he was dead and the violin must be sold again.

Rising, Monsieur Suc took the violin. There was no need to put it away now. It must go back into the window again.

Taking the instrument from its cloth, Monsieur Suc gazed at it sadly. How Jean Edwarde had played upon it only the day before, thought he! How wonderful the music had been with its note of sinister beauty! How enthusiastic Jean Edwarde had become, and what a price he had been willing to pay!

And now Jean Edwarde was dead, and the price could not be paid. Death had robbed him even as it had robbed Madame Clotilde. Yes, and as suddenly and as mysteriously also, for had not the Italian Toni died in the same way? In exactly the same way?

With a sudden gasp of horror, Monsieur Suc dropped the violin upon the counter and shrank back against the shelves. His face was white with doubt and fear, and he held a hand before him as though to ward off some hidden danger.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" he whispered.

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"It can not be. It is a coincidence, that is all. I must not even think of it."

And he set to work to change the current of his thoughts.

But when a little later he placed the violin in his show-window, his hand shook and his eyes could not meet the malignant grin of the carven head-piece, for a suspicion had entered his mind that could not be easily driven away.

CHAPTER V

MONSIEUR SUC BUYS A NEWSPAPER

FOR a week after the death of Jean Edwarde the violin lay undisturbed in the show-window, and during that time Monsieur Suc's suspicions began gradually to fade away. The idea was preposterous, he told himself, if indeed it was not something worse. He was sure that the curé would be displeased if he knew that he had even thought of such a thing. Even the sinister note must have existed in his own imagination, for Jean Edwarde had said nothing of it, and who would have noticed it quicker than he?

No, he must think no more of it. Such things did not happen in these days. And so, as the time passed on, Monsieur Suc came gradually back to his usual peace of mind.

The funeral of Jean Edwarde came and went with a great cortège that marched through the rue Bourbon to the strains of the *Marche Funèbre*, for the violinist had been a very popular man.

At no other time was Monsieur Suc's suspicion so great as when he called to see the widow in her darkened home.

"Ah, M'sieu Suc, I had to send for you," she sobbed. "You were the very last person of whom he spoke, and he told of a kindness that you had done for him. That must be a wonderful violin of yours, for my poor Jean Edwarde could do nothing but talk of it. You must promise me that you will show it to me some day."

Monsieur Suc promised, and as he sat in the darkened room with its tokens of death and sorrow, he felt that there could be no limit to the dreadful possibilities of the black violin. But when a little later he walked home through the bright Winter sunlight, and for the twentieth time gave the instrument a most minute examination, these possibilities seemed very remote and far away.

Thus a week passed while Monsieur Suc read his Froissart, and began to think of Jean Edwarde with only a sad regret. And then, one morning, the violin was played upon again.

Monsieur Suc heard the man when he stopped before the window, and looking up he saw at once that he was a stranger to the city. There was a certain subtle difference in the cut of his clothes and in the way he wore them, and his movements were made with the aimlessness of one who seeks only to kill time.

For a moment or two the stranger stood before the window, and then turning, he entered the shop.

"You have a very curious violin in the window there," said he pleasantly, "and I would like to see it closer."

When, a moment later, Monsieur Suc handed the instrument over the counter, the stranger looked at it with unconcealed interest.

"Upon my word," said he, "it is most remarkable. I have been a collector for several years, and I am also a sort of amateur musician, but I have never seen anything like this before. Would you object to my trying the violin's tone?"

For an instant Monsieur Suc hesitated, his hand half outstretched as though to take the instrument back again. Then his business instinct became uppermost in his thoughts, and he favored the stranger with a polite little nod.

"Certainly, monsieur," said he, "and I promise you that you will find the tone far more remarkable than the violin itself."

BY WAY of answer, the stranger began to play. As he had said, he was only an amateur musician and his music lacked the more finished quality of Jean Edwarde's, yet Monsieur Suc was far more attentive than he had been before.

That beautiful sinister note, had it existed only in his imagination? Now he would learn.

Ah! there it was, laughing as with triumph at some evil deed, mocking him with the doubts and fears of the week before.

Leaning far over the counter, Monsieur Suc raised his voice in protest.

"Stop, monsieur, stop, I beg of you," he cried. "I can not bear it. It brings

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back memories of one who is but recently dead. A thousand pardons, monsieur, but I can listen no more."

The stranger lowered the violin, and smiled in apology at the little dealer in curios. What sensitive people these Frenchmen were.

"I am sorry," said he. "You should have told me before I began to play. The violin is wonderful. I have never heard such a tone. If its memories are painful, they will soon cease to trouble you, for I intend to buy the instrument if it is not too expensive."

Monsieur Suc did not immediately reply. Standing silently behind the counter, his head thrust forward, his face attentively upturned, he seemed still to be listening to the music that he had so suddenly stopped. And when he finally named his price, it had fallen far below the amount that he had asked a week before. For at the first sound of the instrument his business instinct had vanished in a flood of terrible recollection, and his only thought now was that he would never see the violin again.

Taking a card from his pocket, the stranger handed it to Monsieur Suc.

"There is my name," said he, "and, as you will see, I am a stranger here. Unfortunately, I have not enough money with me to pay for the violin, so I am going to ask you to lay it aside for me until I call for it to-morrow morning. I trust that this will be satisfactory to you?"

"Certainly, monsieur," said Monsieur Suc, and after he had bowed his customer from the shop, he once more looked at the card in his hand.

"Walter Brant, Boston," he read slowly. "So," he continued, "I am told that this Boston is a city where all are wise. *Bien*, it shall be for you, Monsieur Brant, when you come in the morning to let me know that I have worried myself for nothing, and am a fool.

"When you come in the morning," he repeated as he placed the violin upon a shelf, and returned to his book and chair.

BUT if Monsieur Suc had neglected his Froissart the week before, he now seemed to relinquish it entirely, for presently he arose and, placing his book upon its little shelf above the armchair, he fell to pacing nervously up and down the shop. All that day he was silent and distracted, and when at supper he stared moodily at the untouched food before him, Lucie spoke first of a *tisane* and later of the doctor.

However, Monsieur Suc would have neither of them. He was not sick, he said. He was a little worried, that was all.

"*Mon Dieu*, what does a girl know of the trials and cares of one's business?" And he stamped away to his bedroom with an irritability that was wholly foreign to his usual gentle self.

He was up almost at daybreak the following morning, opening the shop a good hour before its usual time, and fussing uneasily about, to the utter bewilderment of P'tit Joe.

At nine o'clock he dragged his chair from behind the counter, and seated himself so that he could face the door, although he knew that the stranger would hardly come before midday. And as he sat thus, he became conscious of a sudden, vague desire—a desire for something of which he could not think.

"What can it be?" he asked himself.

He seemed to wish it above all things and yet it persistently eluded him.

From the corner of Conti a newsboy began suddenly to call his wares, and as the sound of his voice came into the shop, Monsieur Suc sprang to his feet with a little cry of comprehension.

He knew what he wanted now. It was a newspaper. If anything had happened, he might find it there. Why, there might be no need for him to wait for this Monsieur Brant at all. But surely nothing could have happened when there was nothing to happen.

As he stepped bareheaded into the street, Monsieur Suc suddenly remembered that this buying of a newspaper at the corner was a thing that he had never done before. There would be several pairs of eyes to watch his every movement, and there would be several tongues to talk about them when he had returned to the shop.

He could hear P'tit Joe now, as he would slip across the street to the store of Lapet, the jeweler:

"Did you see our M'sieu Suc?" he would ask with all of the relish of a born gossip. "At this time he should be reading his Froissart, and behold, he buys a paper from the boy upon the corner. And when I

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was in his shop a while ago he was wandering about like one possessed. There must be some wonderful news in that paper, eh, Lapet? *Bien*, I myself shall buy one."

And then P'tit Joe would buy a paper, and he and Lapet would search it carefully for the news that was of so much interest to him. Of course they would find nothing, but suppose for the sake of argument that the stranger had died, and that they should read of it and connect it with the death of Jean Edwarde and with the black violin?

The thought was absurdly eloquent of Monsieur Suc's state of mind, and yet it left him white and gasping, with a hand outstretched in support against the doorway. A strange feeling possessed him, a feeling of fear, almost of guilt.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said he, and drew a trembling hand across his brow.

Then he saw the newsboy cross from the corner of Conti and come slowly down the street toward him.

IT SEEMED an age to Monsieur Suc before the boy reached the curio shop and it seemed another age before the paper was bought and paid for. Holding it carefully in one hand, Monsieur Suc dragged his chair behind the counter and nerved himself for the ordeal.

Very slowly he looked for that which he feared to find—looked in nervous, anxious haste until finally he stopped at a paragraph well down in the middle of a column. Carefully he read its every word while his face went deathly white, and then with a cry of horror he slid from his chair and fell limply to the floor!

CHAPTER VI

AN ARGUMENT WITH THE CURÉ

WHEN P'tit Joe came in to set his watch next day he found Lucie in charge of the shop—fresh, pretty Lucie, who seemed in the darkened room like some beautiful portrait in an ancient frame.

"And where is your uncle?" asked P'tit Joe when he had finally withdrawn his gaze from the clock of Louis Philippe.

Lucie explained that her uncle was ill. He had seemed out of sorts the morning before, despite the fact that he had gotten up very early. At nine o'clock she had seen him sitting near the door, and, being disturbed by this change in his usual habits, she had come back a little later to see him. Then she had found him lying upon the floor with a newspaper in his hand.

She thought that it was a stroke, though the doctor had said that her uncle had only fainted. Anyhow, she could think what she chose. That was certain. Her uncle was now in bed, where the doctor insisted he should be kept until the following day.

The whole affair was most curious, even to the newspaper that her uncle had held in his hand. He never read the newspapers, and she had thought at first that the one he held was an old one, with which he intended to wrap some bundle. But no, it had been of the issue of that very morning, so her uncle must have bought it. She had questioned him about the matter, but he had only given her vague replies that had told her nothing, and she had been unable to find anything in the paper that could have been of any particular interest to him. Yes, it was a most curious affair.

And thus Lucie prattled on in her girlish way, while the little tailor listened to her with bated breath and glistening eyes, afraid to miss a single word of this wonderful bit of gossip. Presently she finished, and P'tit Joe hurried away half running, in his anxiety to see his friend Lapet, the jeweler.

IN THE meantime Monsieur Suc lay in his little room behind the shop, his Froissart unopened beside him, as he went over the events that had happened since his ill-fated purchase from Madame Clotilde. There was now no doubt in his mind about the violin. What he had read in the newspaper had made the matter a certainty.

Here were three people who had played upon the instrument, and each of them had died in less than a day! But how? That was what puzzled Monsieur Suc, for he had examined the instrument again and again, and save for its color and its head-piece, he had found nothing about it that was different from any other violin.

There was an answer to this puzzle, it was true, but Monsieur Suc could not bring himself even to think of it, until he had exhausted every other argument.

And so he lay, and thought and worried, until finally he resigned himself to the inevitable with a groan of terror.

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Yes, it was the black art—the black art of which he had read so much in the chronicles of ancient France. That was the only answer, and it had been foolish of him to have doubted it before. Did not the sinister note, the color and the head-piece, make the matter more certain? Yes, it could only be the black art.

And here he was, the possessor of this instrument of evil. It was through his efforts that these people had met their deaths, and yet he was innocent. But would others think so if they were to know of it? Would they not think that he was a sorcerer, an emissary of the Evil One, sent into this world to deliver death and destruction to his fellow men? Would they not shun him and hate him—him, Monsieur Suc, whom they all honored and respected?

Monsieur Suc grew cold at the thought. Again he had the strange feeling of the day before, only now the guilt in it was equal to the fear. He looked into the corners of the room and shuddered as though he half expected to see the grinning, evil face of some satanic messenger. What had he done that he should feel this way? It was not his fault, he was innocent, and yet—— And yet he had played his part in two of the tragedies as surely and as certainly as had the black violin itself.

WITH a sudden resolve, Monsieur Suc sat up in bed and called for Lucie. These thoughts were unbearable. He was living in an atmosphere that was unholy, and if he continued doing so he would begin to believe that he was actually guilty. And after that who could say what would happen?

No, this thing must be stopped at once. He would send for the curé, and at the coming of the holy man this evilness would vanish. He would make no confession, for he had nothing to confess. He would only speak with the curé that he might have the influence of the Church about him, and in this influence these accusing thoughts would surely cease to torture him.

But in the matter of the black violin Monsieur Suc proposed to take no chances. The moment that he was able to return to the shop he would destroy it utterly and entirely. No one would ever play upon it again if he could prevent it.

Upon Lucie's arrival, Monsieur Suc requested her to go at once for the curé, whereupon she burst into a torrent of tears.

And so her uncle was going to die! Her good, kind uncle, who was both a father and a mother to her. She had feared it since the day before, and now there was nothing for her to do but to die also. And the doctor had said that it was but a fainting spell. She had known all along that it was something serious. Well, it was a sad world anyhow, and she was the better out of it, who must now live her life alone.

At this Monsieur Suc smiled rather grimly.

"It seems that you have forgotten your Paul, Lucie," said he in a teasing tone. "I am sure that he could console you, and your marriage would only come the quicker.

"But there, there, little one," he went on kindly, repentant at her distress, "I did but tease you. I shall live for many years, never fear, and you will find me in the shop to-morrow. I would see the curé only that I may talk with him, and so pass these dreary hours that I must spend in bed. So run along now and tell the good Father that if he has no better thing to do, I would like to have him come and see me. Also, if he can come, you must stop at the restaurant of your beloved Paul and buy a bottle of the new Médoc or the curé will find our talk dry indeed. As for the shop, it can take care of itself until your return."

And in this manner Lucie's grief was calmed, so that before Monsieur Suc had finished speaking, she was smiling through her tears. Indeed she was smiling still, when, after having kissed her uncle and scolded him roundly for the fright that he had given her, she went to her room. Here she paused for a moment to remove the ravages of her recent grief, and when, a little later, she made her way demurely up the rue Bourbon, no one would have known that she was still radiant with happiness at the thought of seeing her beloved Paul.

THAT her errand was successful, was evidenced some twenty minutes later when the curé arrived with the bottle of Médoc under one arm and a huge volume of Monstrelet under the other.

"Behold, my friend, the reward of the invalid," said he holding up his burdens. "Here are both the history and the wine

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of France. What more could one wish than these, her two greatest products?"

Monsieur Suc smiled and motioned the curé to the chair at the side of his bed.

"A thousand thanks," said he. "It is well worth being ill for. The Monstrelet I know of old, but the wine, *mon Père?* Surely you did not bring that also? I told Lucie to get me a bottle upon her return."

"And here is the proof that she remembered," smiled the curé, holding up the bottle. "We stopped at the restaurant of Benoir upon our return, and who should wait upon us but young Paul. *Voilà*, what would you have? I took the wine and came along, since I must ever make one too many for them save upon a certain future occasion. And the occasion, my friend, when will it be?"

Monsieur Suc shook his head.

"Who knows?" he answered. "A little more of this lying sick in bed, and perhaps it will be very soon. It will not be long at all events, and Lucie is all that I have. Perhaps I am selfish, but the two have many years before them. And now, *mon Père*, for your second burden, the Monstrelet. Surely you will agree with me now, in that matter upon which we have disagreed so long?"

"That I can not do, for all your illness," replied the curé, and immediately there began an historical debate which waxed furiously for a good half-hour, while the Médoc waned, and the two debaters remained fully as unconvinced as they had been before.

IT IS probable that the argument would have lasted the entire afternoon had not the curé finally made some slight reference to the black art. Instantly Monsieur Suc fell back among his pillows, and the brilliancy of his argument departed from him in a wave of unhappy recollection. Into his eyes there came a look of uneasiness and he closed them, turning his head away that his visitor might not see.

At once the curé began to reproach himself.

"Alas, my friend, what have I done?" said he. "I should have known that you were in no condition for such a discussion. I will go at once, that you may compose yourself."

But this Monsieur Suc would not allow him to do. Indeed, he implored him to remain, with a vehemence that was almost pathetic.

"It is nothing, *mon Père*," said he hurriedly. "A little weakness, that is all. Do not go, I beg of you, for I will only fret here alone and perhaps make myself really ill. Let us go on with the discussion. You were saying——"

His voice trembled, and he paused as if to gain strength before proceeding.

"Ah, yes," he continued, "you spoke of the black art. Now there is something over which I have puzzled often. What do you think of it, *mon Père?*"

The curé shrugged his shoulders distastefully.

"It is not a pleasant subject to discuss," answered he. "Perhaps in those days they knew, but for myself I can see nothing in it but trickery—evil trickery."

Monsieur Suc sat up in bed, while into his eyes there came a faint look of relief.

"So," said he, "you are right. It was all trickery and imagination and perhaps some evil influence."

The curé nodded appreciatively.

"That is it," he replied; "but as for the evil influence, you will find it everywhere, and that to my mind is the true black art. Satan is ever ready with his evil influence, and there are only too many in this world who are glad to make use of it."

Monsieur Suc stirred uneasily beneath the covers.

"And to continue with this evil influence," said he, "would it be possible for one to use it who did not wish to do so? Could it be forced upon one?"

"Most assuredly," answered the curé. "This happens every day of our lives. But then one has but to assert his better self and the influence will quickly leave him."

Monsieur Suc was now plainly excited.

"But suppose it will not leave so quickly?" he persisted. "Suppose that one desires it to leave above all else in the world, and yet it will not do so?"

The curé smiled and shook his head.

"That can not be," said he. "God is always more powerful than Satan."

"But I tell you that it can be so," began Monsieur Suc vehemently.

And then he paused, while his eyes grew wide with terror, for he had heard a sound. It was a faint sound, elusive and far away,

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yet it was unmistakably the sound of the black violin!

FOR a moment Monsieur Suc thought that he was going mad, and then, his better senses asserting themselves, he saw that there was another, saner solution of the sound. Some one must be playing upon the violin.

Springing from his bed, he hurried to the door and threw it open, while the curé stared after him in amazement.

"God!" cried Monsieur Suc, and leaned for a moment against the doorway, for as he did so there came from the direction of the shop the quick, stirring notes of a negro breakdown. Louder and clearer came the music, while the little curio dealer leaned limp and silent, staring straight before him in speechless horror.

In an instant the curé was at his side, and had seized him by the arm.

"My friend, my friend, what is it?" he asked anxiously.

At his touch, Monsieur Suc became again all action.

"It is death!" he gasped, and hurried out toward the shop,with the curé following close behind him.

CHAPTER VII

PAUL GIVES A SURPRISE

BUT let us return to Lucie, whose business it was to keep the shop that day.

It was not until the curé had been gone a good ten minutes from the restaurant of Monsieur Benoir, that she noticed his absence.

"But the curé? And where is he?" she asked anxiously.

"He has gone," answered Paul with an unmistakable note of relief in his voice.

"And the Médoc?" asked Lucie, looking for it where Paul had placed it upon the counter at the back of the restaurant. "I must go at once."

"The curé has taken it with him, and by now he is opening it for your uncle, M'sieu Suc," replied Paul, going through the operation in pantomime. "It is good that they have it, who will speak about things so dry. To me these dead queens are most uninteresting. It is in a live queen that I am interested. Such a queen now as yourself, Lucie."

'Ah, Paul, you would mock me," replied Lucie, blushing divinely.

In the instant her uncle, the shop, and the Médoc vanished from her thoughts. And well might they do so, for it was rare indeed that these two had an opportunity of seeing each other in the afternoon.

For years they had been in love, almost from the beginning of their childhood, and it seemed each time they met that they only loved each other the more. It was seldom that a night came along when Paul did not go to the shop of Monsieur Suc, and always Lucie was waiting there to greet him. All through the long nights of summer, and through the milder nights of winter, the two would sit in the little courtyard behind the shop and talk of the happy days that were to come to them.

And as they talked, Monsieur Suc would often look out at them and smile with satisfaction at the excellent match that his little Lucie had made. He was very fond of big, handsome Paul, and he thought that in all the world there was no other man whom he would rather have his Lucie marry. Did not all the men speak well of Paul, praising his honesty, his ability, and his unfailing kindness to every one? And as for the women, they were all wild about him, even to the daughter of rich Monsieur Lapet, the jeweler. There was a cat for you. Why, she had actually run after him. And through it all Paul had held steadfastly to the one whom he had loved from childhood.

Yes, the match was most satisfactory to Monsieur Suc, and yet, as has been seen, he could not bring himself to give up his niece. No, not even after she had once told him that perhaps in time Paul would become tired of waiting for her and would marry some one else.

To this Monsieur Suc had replied:

"*Bien*, if you have been able to capture such a fine fellow once, little one, you will be able to do so again."

AS FOR fat, jolly Monsieur Benoir, the father of Paul, he was even more pleased with the match than was Monsieur Suc. Lucie was an angel, he declared, and far too good for his son. When she and Paul were married he would begin really to live for the first time since the death of his wife many years before. And there might be children also—even

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grandchildren. Consider such good fortune. Then he would retire and turn over the entire business to Paul, that he might sit in his room above the restaurant and play with the children. And if any one were to speak to him in these days of pompano or of gumbo, they would hear from him, you may be sure.

It was Monsieur Benoir himself who finally interrupted the conversation of the two lovers, and brought back Lucie to a remembrance of her duties at the shop. Creeping ponderously upon her across the sanded floor, he caught her tiny ear with a playful attempt at severity.

"Holà," he cried, "what does this mean? Is it not enough that Paul must leave here each day at sunset? Must you also take him from his work in the afternoon? It will not be long now before he has given up his duties entirely."

At being thus brought back to the life of every day, Lucie sprang from behind the counter and surveyed her accuser with an anxious air.

"Alas, Monsieur Benoir, what have I done?" she cried. "And you, you wicked Paul," she continued, turning upon the offender, "here you have kept me listening to your pretty speeches while the shop stays with no one to wait upon its customers. Should my uncle fall ill again, he will wish to hire an assistant."

She was half-way to the door before Monsieur Benoir grasped the meaning of her words, and hurried forward to detain her. His playfulness was gone now, and he spoke with the sympathy that one who has seldom been ill has for those less fortunate.

"What's that?" he asked. "Your uncle is ill? I had not heard of it. Wait now but a moment, Lucie, and I will send him such a supper that it will make him well again. A quail *à la Creole*, a salad of endive, and some rolls. It will take but a moment, since they are all upon the regular menu for to-day, and Paul shall carry them for you. Yes, Paul shall do it, since he is the offender."

At this Lucie paused while Paul took up his father's argument.

"The very thing," cried he, "and I shall take my penance very humbly. See, Lucie, you shall surprise your uncle with this feast, and I am sure that he will be so pleased that he will not mind the shop's being without a clerk for a while. Also, that he may not eat alone, I shall put in another quail for the curé and a bottle of Médoc, in case he has finished the one that he brought with him."

Upon hearing this, Lucie could do nothing but express her thanks and wait with Monsieur Benoir until the supper had been carefully packed in a basket. A little later she set forth from the restaurant with Paul, and as the two made their way down the rue Royale many were the admiring glances that were cast at the handsome youth and the pretty girl beside him.

FINALLY they arrived at the shop of Monsieur Suc, where Lucie left her lover for a moment to put away the peace-offering until her uncle's supper hour. While she was gone, Paul roamed aimlessly about, looking at the curios with the silent awe which one feels at something that he does not understand. He was especially interested in the clock of Louis Philippe, and, as the shop was very dark at this hour of the afternoon, he stepped behind the counter that he might see it the closer.

"So this was the gift of a king," thought Paul, "a great King of France. It should be in Paris, the wonderful city I long so much to see. Perhaps I will go there some day with Lucie. Ah, that were something to think of!"

With a little sigh of happiness Paul turned away, and as he did so his glance fell upon something black, that lay upon a shelf behind the counter. Instantly the look of awe vanished from his face, and his eyes shone with comprehension, for here was something that he knew and could understand. Taking up the object, he examined it closely, nodding his head with a gesture of satisfaction.

"A violin," said he, "and a strange one, too. Now indeed will there be a surprise for Lucie, also."

As he spoke he smiled with anticipation, for Lucie had no idea that he could play. Several weeks before, Monsieur Benoir had hired a new cook, and it was from him that Paul had learned the little that he knew of the violin. Fat and black and bubbling over with music and good nature, this cook had sat each night in the courtyard behind the kitchen, and had filled the air with the plantation melodies which he drew from an ancient fiddle.

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At first Paul had been annoyed, then he had become interested, and finally he had asked the cook to give him some instruction in his art. So after that Paul had spent an hour each morning in the courtyard, while Monsieur Benoir had growled and grumbled at the fiendish noises of his only son.

AND of all this Paul had spoken no word to Lucie, for he did not wish her to know of his accomplishment until he had been dismissed by his teacher and had bought a violin of his own.

But here was an opportunity that he could not resist. Besides, he now played almost as well as his instructor, and there was grave danger that Lucie would hear of his playing before he himself told her.

Grasping the violin tightly, Paul waited for Lucie to return. A moment later she appeared in the doorway, where she paused in sudden surprise.

"Why, Paul," she cried, "what are you doing with the black violin? Put it down, I beg of you, for there is something about it that I do not like, and your great hands are apt to break it."

At this Paul smiled disdainfully. Break it, indeed!

"Wait but a moment, and you shall learn what I am doing," said he, and raising the violin, he pressed it firmly against his left side as his instructor had taught him to do.

"But, Paul," laughed Lucie, "that is not even the way to hold a violin. Put it under your chin, Paul, under your chin."

Again Paul smiled disdainfully.

"For those like poor Jean Edwarde, who play the opera, that is the way," said he. "For those like myself, who play the jig, this is the way."

And bending a little forward that he might keep close watch upon his fingers, he began to play. At first he played with the slowness of uncertainty, and then as his confidence came back to him his bow flew faster and faster with every stroke. Louder and fiercer came the tones of the breakdown, while Lucie stood in the doorway radiant with surprise and pleasure.

"Why, Paul," she cried, "it is beautiful, it is wonderful. And so you have kept it as a surprise for me? I can not tell you how——"

She broke off speaking, to stare in sudden amazement behind her, while Paul ceased his playing and stared also, the violin swinging loosely in his hand.

Then, with a hoarse cry, Monsieur Suc, barefooted and clothed only in his dressing-gown, burst into the room.

CHAPTER VIII

MONSIEUR SUC DESPAIRS

AT THE sight of Paul with the violin in his hand Monsieur Suc stopped as suddenly as though he had been stricken with paralysis. Pointing a trembling finger before him, he shrank back toward the door, his lips moving silently, for he was speechless with horror.

"What is it? What is it?" cried Lucie, hurrying toward him, unmindful of the curé, who was just entering the doorway.

And all the while Paul stood frozen with amazement, the violin still held in his hand.

Finally Monsieur Suc found his voice, and turned to Paul with a cry of anguish.

"You?" he cried. "You? Ah, Paul, why could it not have been another? Ah, Lucie, what will become of you now?"

At the tone of his voice, rather than at what he had said, Lucie grew deathly white, and would have fallen had not the curé caught her.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" she repeated helplessly.

Upon seeing her distress, Paul seemed to recover his senses. Striding over to Lucie, he drew her from the curé and placed a protecting arm about her. Then he turned to Monsieur Suc, who stood eying him with a terrified fascination.

"Yes, m'sieu, what is it?" he asked quietly. "If it concerns Lucie and myself, no one better can know of it than I. Speak out, and do not keep us in suspense."

Monsieur Suc pointed at the violin in Paul's hand.

"It is that accursed instrument," said he brokenly. "To play upon it is death. You killed yourself, Paul, the moment that you struck the first note upon it."

With a sigh of relief Paul released Lucie, and going over to Monsieur Suc he laid a kindly hand upon his shoulder.

"Come, come, m'sieu," said he. "This will never do. You are sick and do not know what you say. This is a most excellent violin, and as I am in need of one, you must sell it to me when you are better.

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Come, now, and return to your room, where Lucie shall presently have a surprise for you."

But Monsieur Suc was not to be quieted so easily.

"Paul, Paul," he cried, the tears running down his cheeks, "you do not know, my boy. You do not understand. I tell you that it is death to play upon the violin, and that you will die!"

There was a certainty in his voice that caused the smile of incredulity to leave Paul's lips, that caused him to raise the violin and look at it with a sudden, terrible interest.

"Very well, m'sieu," said he slowly. "If this is so, there can be no help for it. But at least you will explain the matter to me."

And once more he placed his arm about Lucie.

THE curé, who was now strangely calm, brought forward a chair, and gently forced Monsieur Suc into it.

"Yes, my friend," said he, "you must explain this matter at once, for if you are not out of your senses, and there is truth in what you say, we must do something to save the life of Paul."

"There is nothing that you can do, nothing!" cried Monsieur Suc hopelessly. "The violin is bewitched by the Evil One, and it kills all who play upon it. It is the black art, *mon Père*, of which we spoke but a while ago. The little Italian Toni played upon the violin and he died, leaving it to Madame Clotilde, who sold it to me. Then Jean Edwarde played upon it and died, and I became suspicious. And then, *mon Père*, a stranger saw it in the window and wished to try its tone. That night he died also, at his hotel. I read of it in the paper, and I became certain.

"I had meant to destroy the accursed thing to-morrow when I returned to the shop, and now, before I can do it, Paul plays upon it so that he will die also. Paul of all men in the world. Ah, but this is too much, too much!"

And bowing his head, Monsieur Suc wept and moaned in a perfect abandonment of grief.

For a moment the curé gazed at him sadly, while the look of fear upon Paul's face changed to one of the deepest compassion. Raising his hand, the curé tapped it lightly upon his head, and whispered a single word.

"Froissart," said he meaningly, and bent over Monsieur Suc, patting him reassuringly upon the shoulder.

"Come, come, my friend," he pleaded, "you must not act in this manner. You are ill and overwrought, and your imagination has gotten the better of you. We should never have had our discussion. Surely you can not believe this thing, which, if it is so, is but a sad coincidence. Of Toni and the stranger I can tell you nothing, but think of Jean Edwarde. There were three doctors at the house, and all of them said that it was the heart. Quiet yourself, and think no more of the matter. See, Paul is smiling as you will smile to-morrow at your useless excitement of to-day."

"Yes, yes," urged Paul. "You will be troubled with me for many a day, never fear. To-morrow you will have to ask our forgiveness for the scare that you have given us."

Going over to her uncle, Lucie put her arms about him and lifted his face to her own.

"See," said she brightly, "I am laughing at your foolish fears, Uncle Maurice. Do you think that I could do so if I thought that there was any danger for Paul? Come back to your room now, and I will prepare a draft for you that will make you wonder why you ever thought of such terrible things."

But in spite of their entreaties Monsieur Suc continued to weep and moan.

"It is true, I tell you," he kept repeating dully. "You think me mad, but it is true!"

AFTER a while he became quiet, and sat staring before him in a silent despair that was even more pitiful than his excitement of a while before. It was then that the curé went into the living-room for a moment, and returned with his hat in his hand.

"Come, Paul," said he, "we had best be going. Help your uncle to his room, Lucie, and do not leave him until he has fallen asleep. I will see the doctor upon my way home, and will return later to stay until morning. Then I hope that your uncle will have recovered from his needless fears."

Laying his hand for a moment upon the bowed head of Monsieur Suc, he raised his eyes as though in silent prayer.

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"*Au revoir*, my friend," said he. "I hope that you will be in better spirits when I return."

Monsieur Suc scarcely heard him. Huddled far down in his chair, the little curio-dealer seemed to have aged as much as though a dozen years had elapsed since his coming into the shop. Slowly, beseechingly, he looked from Paul to the curé, nodding his head from time to time as though he were accepting the inevitable.

Very sadly the curé turned away, and as he did so, Monsieur Suc seemed to come to a sudden decision.

"One moment, *mon Père*," he called. "There is something that you can do for Paul after all, if he is willing."

Rising from his chair with an unaccustomed feebleness, Monsieur Suc took Lucie by the hand. Then he turned to Paul, his eyes shining with determination. He seemed to have himself well in hand now, and when he spoke his voice was firm and even.

"Paul," said he, "I know that you think me mad, but I am not. What I have said is true, and I pray that you will not hold me responsible. If I could, I would gladly give my life for yours, but as that is impossible, I see but one thing to do. You have but a few hours before you in which to accomplish all that you have desired in this world, and the greatest of all these desires, so you have told me, has been to marry my niece. I see now that I have been a selfish old man to have denied you so long, and the knowledge is all the more terrible since it comes at a time when I can do little in atonement.

"There is, though, one thing that I can do, even at this late moment. For a few hours at least, Lucie can be your wife, and if you are willing and desire it, the curé shall marry you at once."

At this Paul bowed with simple dignity.

"M'sieu," said he, "you have made me the happiest and the proudest man in all this world. It is hard for me to believe that death will come to one as well and as strong as I am, but if it does come, then can I find no fault with that which has brought me my greatest desire. As for holding you responsible, I could not do so were I to die a thousand times. But in the matter of this marriage there is one who must be considered before myself. What do you say, Lucie?"

By way of answer, Lucie came over to him and placed her hand in his own. Her face was bright with happiness and yet she caught her breath with a little sob of fear.

"Ah, Paul, how can you ask, when you know so well?" she whispered.

Monsieur Suc turned to the curé. "You had best hasten, *mon Père*," said he. "These two will not have long together."

"But the witnesses, the license?" objected the curé. "The marriage will be irregular."

Monsieur Suc threw out his hands with a gesture of impatience.

"Would you speak of such things to a man who is upon the very brink of the grave?" asked he.

THE curé thought for a moment and then reached inside his cassock for his ritual. Clearly Monsieur Suc was mad—hopelessly mad—and it was imperative that Lucie should have the comfort of some one in the dark days that were before her. And who could be better for such a purpose than Paul?

Here at last was a chance to bring about the marriage for which he had worked so hard, for which he had pleaded so often. Perhaps upon the morrow Monsieur Suc would again forbid it. It was the habit of mad people to go from one extreme to the other.

He could not perform this irregular marriage, it was true, but he could perform the ceremony of espousal. Afterward the couple could be married despite any protest that Monsieur Suc might make.

His decision formed, the curé turned to Paul.

"Paul," said he in a low voice, "I am going to espouse Lucie and yourself, and to-morrow I will marry you. Say nothing, but follow my instructions."

With a nod of understanding, Paul led Lucie forward. Monsieur Suc fell upon his knees and bowed his head in prayer.

It was very still in the shop as the curé opened his book—so still that the ticking of the clock of Louis Philippe came harsh and clear from the show-window, like the profanation of some sacred silence. Through the dingy panes a ray of the dying sunlight struggled, and, glancing from the clock's polished sides, it illumined the face of a weird Chinese god which seemed to smile in heathen mockery. In one of the dark

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corners a piece of battered armor rattled uneasily, disturbed by the passing of some heavy vehicle outside.

Slowly and clearly the curé read out the service—his long Latin sentences seeming strangely in accord with their ancient setting—and thus Paul and Lucie were espoused in the little shop upon the rue Bourbon, while Monsieur Suc knelt beside them and thought that their marriage was accomplished.

When it was all over and the curé had given his benediction, Paul kissed Lucie and held out his hand to Monsieur Suc.

"I thank you more than I can tell you, m'sieu," said he simply.

Ignoring his outstretched hand, Monsieur Suc put his arms about the young man and kissed him affectionately upon the cheek.

"Paul, Paul," he cried, "I am proud of you and I love you as though you were my own son!"

"And you, Lucie," he continued, drawing her to him, "I am proud of you also, who have won such a fine man and are so worthy of him. Believe me, I am happy in the happiness that has come to you, and I do not see now why I have not let this marriage take place before."

His face was flushed and his eyes were shining, for he had forgotten the black violin in the excitement of the espousal.

"See, *mon Père*," he cried proudly. "Behold the bride and the groom! Have you ever seen a finer couple? Stand back and consider this pair, that you may tell me if you have ever seen another that can even approach them."

Seizing the curé's hand he stepped briskly backward, his eyes fixed upon Paul and Lucie, who stood smiling happily before him. As he did so, his foot struck against something upon the floor, and looking down he saw the black violin, lying where Paul had dropped it at the beginning of the espousal.

GONE instantly was Monsieur Suc's happiness, his pride and his satisfaction, and in their place came the horrors of a while before. Stooping swiftly, he seized the violin.

"So," he cried bitterly, "you would lie there and mock me, would you, you thing of evil? Well, at least I shall have my revenge upon you even though it comes too late to be of any benefit to Paul."

Raising the instrument he poised it for a moment above his head as though to take a careful aim before he shattered it upon the floor. But at this movement Paul sprang forward and seized his arm.

"Hold, m'sieu," said he, "the violin is yours, it is true, but it has brought me my happiness, and I can not see it destroyed the moment afterward. If it causes my death, as you say it will, then you may destroy it and gladly. But until then I beg that you will give it the chance to prove its innocence."

Gently releasing Monsieur Suc's grasp, he crossed the room and placed the violin where he had found it, upon the shelf behind the counter.

"See," he continued, "I will leave the instrument here, and to-morrow I will return to play a jig upon it. If I do so, will you dance, M'sieu Suc?"

For a moment Monsieur Suc did not answer, but stood where Paul had left him as motionless as one turned to stone.

"If you do so, I shall be glad to dance even as they were made to in ancient times —upon bars of heated iron," he answered finally. "But what is the use in my saying more when you think me mad?" he continued in a sudden burst of despair. "Ah, Paul, Paul, would to God that it were not so, but I tell you again, and tell you truthfully, that before to-morrow morning you will be a dead man."

And sinking into his chair he covered his face with his hands.

CHAPTER IX

UNCLE TOTO

BUT Paul did not die. Contrary to the predictions of Monsieur Suc, he returned to the curio shop the following morning, as strong and as well as he had left it the evening before.

Lucie met him with a cry of thankfulness, for she had spent a sleepless night, and as for her uncle—his joy and relief knew no bounds. Taking Paul in his arms, Monsieur Suc passed a fearful hand about him as though to assure himself that the young man was indeed flesh and blood, and not a spirit from the other world.

"Paul, Paul," he cried, his cheeks wet with tears, "are you indeed alive? Yes, it is so, and my reason is saved, for had you

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died, I would most certainly have gone mad. Come, let us kneel and give our thanks to God, who has saved us both in His goodness and mercy."

It was thus that the curé found them when he came a little later to inquire after Monsieur Suc, and although he rejoiced at his friend's relief, he could not refrain from giving him a gentle rebuke for his words of the day before.

"And so you see that God is good," admonished the curé. "Remember this, my friend, and do not doubt again, for perhaps the patience of Heaven is not eternal."

"I will remember and I will also atone for my sin, *mon Père,*" replied Monsieur Suc humbly. "Ah, do not think that I am not thankful and happy because I weep. In youth happiness comes with smiles, for it is of the heart; but in age it comes with tears, for then it is of the soul. Believe me, I feel almost young again."

And as the days passed on this seemed to be so, for with the vanishing of his doubts and fears Monsieur Suc returned to his affairs with an enthusiasm that was almost boyish. Once more he placed the black violin in the show-window, and as he did so he met the malignant grin of the carven head-piece without a tremor.

He could see it all now. It had been a matter of coincidence, as the curé had said —a matter of coincidence enlarged upon and made terrible by his imagination. He had been foolish to refuse to listen to those who could so easily have brought him back to his senses, but then he had been ill and overwrought. Now that he was well once more, he would never think of such things again.

AND in his joy at the return of his peace of mind, Monsieur Suc made no objection to the marriage of his niece. Indeed, he gave his permission willingly, and even went so far as to insist that the marriage should take place at once.

Upon three points, however, he was firm. The wedding must be a most simple one, and it must take place in the living-room behind the shop. Also, Paul must promise him that he would live with him for a while at least, that he might have time in which to resign himself to the loss of Lucie.

So thus the affair was arranged without any objection from Paul and Lucie, who were only too eager to take advantage of Monsieur Suc's high spirits.

Early upon the afternoon of the wedding-day, Monsieur Suc closed the shop and shut himself in his bedroom. Here he remained for a long, busy hour, and when he finally returned to the outside world he was dressed in the full glory of the costume which, many years before, he had brought with him from Paris.

Of all Monsieur Suc's possessions, this costume was perhaps the most curious, and yet, once he put it on, the transformation was marvelous. For with the donning of these magical garments the little curio dealer disappeared in a moment, and in his place was a small, distinguished-looking gentleman—nay, a courtier of ancient France.

Standing now before the glass in the living-room, Monsieur Suc gravely examined his costume, shaking his head sadly at each new evidence of age and wear, carefully noting each spot and wrinkle with a sigh of resignation.

"It is no use, *mon Père,*" said he forlornly when the curé arrived. "My suit is almost worn out despite the fact that I have not had it on a dozen times in the last ten years. And where in the world am I to find another like it?"

"Save in your Froissart, I know of no other place," replied the curé, smiling, and with this slight encouragement his friend was forced to content himself until the rest of the wedding party arrived.

Monsieur Suc met them at the door of the shop and bowed them inside with the pomp and dignity of a prime minister.

"Welcome, welcome, my friends," he cried as they passed in review before him.

FIRST came Paul, proud and happy, and dressed in a new black suit. After Paul came Monsieur Benoir, almost as proud and happy as his son, and dressed, like him, in the finest and newest of garments.

"Holà, m'sieu!" he cried jovially. "I am indeed glad to see you looking so well. Believe me, I can understand your despair, especially as it concerned the life of Paul. Had it been myself who thought such things, by now I would be either mad or dead. Or perhaps both. Who knows?" he added vaguely, while his red face grew pale at the mere thought of such a thing.

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Last of all came Paul's Uncle Toto, accompanied by his wife Mimie. Uncle Toto was a tall, cadaverous man in marked contrast to his wife, who was plump and pretty and not at all unconscious of her charms.

These two were Paul's nearest relatives upon his mother's side, and it was their duty to act as witnesses. With them the wedding party was complete, as all of Monsieur Benoir's relatives lived in the far distant parish of Vermilion, whence it was impossible to draw them upon any kind of notice.

Extending a bony hand to Monsieur Suc, Uncle Toto gave vent to the dismal cough with which he always began his conversations.

"Benoir has told me of the violin and of Paul's playing upon it," said he mournfully. "Perhaps he will die after all, since on account of his youth and strength he is likely to live a little longer than the others."

"Toto, Toto!" cried his wife reprovingly. "How can you say such things?"

"*Mon Dieu!*" growled Monsieur Benoir, who heartily disliked his gloomy brother-in-law, "is it not enough that you should look like a crow, but you must act like one also? Cease your croaking, I beg of you, and try to remember that this affair is a wedding, and no funeral."

"*Bien*," replied Uncle Toto, "we shall see."

His mournful predictions, however, could have no effect upon the high spirits of Paul.

"Come, come," he cried, "let us have no misunderstandings upon this, my wedding-day. Have no fear, Uncle Toto, for Jean Edwarde was even a larger man than I am. But come, we are wasting valuable time. The longer we stand here talking, the longer it will be before I am married."

"Yes," agreed Monsieur Suc, "we must not keep the bride waiting," and he led the way to the living-room in a manner that was almost regal. "Surely this Toto is as big a fool as I was a while ago," said he to himself as he went along.

THE curé met the party in the living-room, and there Aunt Mimie left them to see if she could be of any assistance to Lucie. But if she rendered any service, it was slight indeed, for in a moment she was back again.

"Behold the bride," said she dramatically and pointed to the doorway.

With a cry of joy Paul sprang forward, while Monsieur Suc raised his chin a trifle in a last effort of dignified composure. And then Lucie came into the room and walked to her uncle's side.

Alone and unattended, she had arrayed herself for her wedding-day, and yet it was seldom that so fair a bride stood before the curé. Slowly and proudly she took her place beside Monsieur Suc, and her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were shining at thought of the happiness that was in store for her.

"She is an angel," whispered Monsieur Benoir to Uncle Toto, his voice shaking with pride and emotion.

"Perhaps so, but one angel is enough for any man," replied his brother-in-law, beckoning furiously to his wife to take her place beside him.

And from then on he watched the marriage in jealous silence, for he had been unable to understand the explanation of the former ceremony.

"So," said he enviously when it was all over, "this couple will now have two anniversaries to celebrate, whereas I have but one."

After Monsieur Suc had kissed Lucie and embraced Paul, he turned to the dining-table, which was heavily laden with wine and glasses and a huge white bridal cake. Filling the glasses he handed them to his guests and then raised his own on high.

"Drink," said he, "to the happiness of Paul and Lucie. May they who have twice stood before the curé be twice blessed."

He paused for a moment to look lovingly at his niece, and as he did so his eyes were dim with tears.

"So," said he with a note of finality in his voice, and tossed off the wine as though it contained the germ of some unhappy recollection.

"And now," cried Monsieur Suc with a sudden gaiety, "let us drink and be merry. Truly it will be a long time before we have another such cause for rejoicing. Cut the cake, Lucie, while I go and bring to you the present for your wedding."

Hurrying out to the shop, he returned in a moment with a leather case in his hand. He seemed to have grown a good ten years younger in his pleasure and excitement, and in his faded cheeks there glowed two tiny spots of pink. Opening the case he drew from it a pair of ancient earrings, large

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and heavy and set with two great shimmering pearls.

"See," said he softly, "a marquise wore them once, little one, and yet they are none too good for you. Take them, Lucie, and my blessing with them. A little while and they would have been yours anyway, since all that I have will come to you when I am gone. That will be your dot, my child, and perhaps it will be a better one than you imagine."

"But that is handsome in you, my friend," cried Monsieur Benoir. "As for Paul, he also shall have all that I possess. Truly these two will be wealthy in the years to come, and they should be happy also. Consider now the satisfaction that one can have at looking with a well-filled stomach upon your many wonderful things."

"The pearls are beautiful," said Aunt Mimie, looking at them enviously. "It is a pity, Toto, that you could not have had such an uncle at your wedding."

"There is yet time for one of my uncles at least to make you a present," replied her husband, smiling with mournful satisfaction, for the uncle of whom he spoke kept a little undertaking establishment near the French market.

BUT despite the gloomy Uncle Toto, the party was a merry one. Long they sat about the table, laughing and talking, while the shadows lengthened, and Monsieur Suc opened fresh bottles of wine.

Finally it grew quite dark, and with the passing of the daylight Monsieur Benoir became strangely uneasy. Again and again he stirred restlessly in his chair, examining his watch and clearing his throat, and when at last the hands of his timepiece stood at the hour of eight he could contain himself no longer.

Rising to his feet, he asked for the attention of all and stood for a moment looking uncertainly about him as though he sought in vain for that which he wished to say.

"My friends," he finally began, "it is useless for me to attempt to tell you of my pride and happiness, so you must consider that as having been said. Therefore, I am only going to thank M'sieu Suc for the pleasant time that he has given us. He has been most generous to us all, and since it is not fair that the generosity should all be upon one side, I am going to try and begin where he has left off."

He paused for a moment as though to gain confidence for a fresh start.

"*Bien*, it is about time," whispered Uncle Toto, and was instantly suppressed by his wife.

"As for my present to the bride," continued Monsieur Benoir, "I will say nothing of it now. There is a little house upon the edge of the city that I have my eye upon, but Paul has made a bargain with his new uncle, and it can wait until later on. Also, I have no gold or pearls, but I have a restaurant, and if you will now come with me to it, you will find waiting there for you the finest feast that I have been able to prepare."

His speech was greeted with a loud murmur of appreciation, in which Paul joined as heartily as the others, for his father had told him nothing of his plan.

AND so with much merriment and good humor the little party set forth for the restaurant of Monsieur Benoir. As they were passing through the shop, Paul went suddenly behind the counter and returned with the black violin in his hand.

"See," said he, "here is the cause of all my happiness, and if M'sieu Suc has no objection, I am going to take it along with me. It is not right that it should be absent from the wedding-feast, and its music will make things the merrier."

But at sight of the instrument Lucie recoiled in sudden loathing.

"Put it back, Paul," she begged. "There is something about it that I do not like, despite my gratitude for what it has done for us."

"Yes, put it back, Paul," agreed Aunt Mimie. "I should think that you would never want to touch it again."

Paul shrugged indifferently.

"Very well," he replied, and he would have returned the violin to its place in the show-window had it not been for Monsieur Suc.

"Bring it along, of course," said the little curio dealer, whose spirits were unusually high on account of the wine that he had taken. "We will all enjoy its music, and there is no reason why Lucie should pay any attention to the fancies that I had when I was ill. Is not Paul here himself to disprove them?"

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"Yes, bring it by all means," urged Uncle Toto, trying vainly to see the instrument in the darkness of the shop. "I am most anxious both to see and hear this violin of which you say such terrible things."

As for the curé, he said nothing, and Monsieur Benoir was too anxious about his feast to give the matter a thought.

With a little grimace of distaste, Lucie gave her consent.

"Very well," said she, "bring it with you, Paul, if they all desire it, but remember that I have had nothing to do with the matter."

"May the sin be upon my own head," replied Paul laughingly.

And tucking the violin beneath one arm, he gave Lucie the other, and passed out into the street.

CHAPTER X

THE WEDDING-FEAST OF MONSIEUR BENOIR

THE restaurant of Monsieur Benoir was set in the middle of a block, upon the rue Royale. It was a long, narrow building of two stories, and upon its weather-beaten front were the marks of many years.

When Monsieur Benoir had first come as a wondering *cajun* to the city he had seen this building, and he had admired both its size and its beauty. Having never seen a building of more than one story, it had seemed tremendous to him, and he had wondered if he would ever have the good fortune to own a place of even half the size.

Now, however, its smallness was a constant source of annoyance to him, and he was only kept from moving to more commodious quarters by his love for the old place.

"No, Paul," he would often say to his son when discussing the matter, "it will never do to move. For forty years I have lived here, I have worked here, and the place has become a part of me. Also, this moving would hurt our business.

"What do I hear, whenever I go to Vermilion, to Iberia, or to Saint Martin? Always it is the same thing. Gabbie will return from the city and he will say to his friends: 'Yes, I had my dinner at Benoir's. That is the place for you. The ducks and the crawfish are just as they came from the *coulée*. Yes, Benoir's on the rue Royale, as any one will show you.'

"And so," Monsieur Benoir would continue, "these people will go to the rue Royale, and they will find us. But they will not ask for us, Paul, for, as you know, they are very timid. *Bien*, if we move, they will never find us, and where will that trade be then? Nevertheless the place is very small."

It seemed even smaller than usual, when Monsieur Benoir led the wedding party through the narrow alley at one side and finally ushered them into the little private dining-room in the rear.

"It is very cramped," said he apologetically, "yet is the best that I can do. The other dining-room is larger, it is true, but it was engaged a week ago by some of my regular customers. They will give a great dinner and presently they will ask the waiter for their friend, Monsieur Benoir, that they may compliment him. Then will I ask them to congratulate me also.

"But be seated, all of you, and give me your opinion of the bisque when it comes. I made it myself this morning, and I am sure that you will agree with me that no one really understands the crawfish save a genuine *cajun*. So, we shall see."

As he talked, Monsieur Benoir was busily engaged in seating his guests, placing the curé upon one side of him and Monsieur Suc upon the other, at the foot of the table. At the head, he insisted that Lucie should sit with Paul and Aunt Mimie upon either side of her.

Mon Dieu! was she not now the mistress of the restaurant?

As for Uncle Toto, he was placed next to his wife in the middle of the table.

"Have it as you will," said he resignedly, looking at the vacant space on the other side of the table. "I shall now make it my business to eat also the dinner of the one who should be opposite."

THEN the *bisque* was brought in, in a great dish that looked as though it might hold the population of an entire *coulée*.

"I sometimes think," said Monsieur Benoir, holding his spoon meditatively before him, "that if one of these little creatures could come to life, he would be a Napoleon among his fellows. Consider what one would be after having all that was best in a dozen others thrust into the back of his head."

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"That would depend upon the dozen others," replied Uncle Toto, scenting an argument. "As for myself, I would not care to go through such an experiment until I had chosen them carefully."

"And even then I doubt if they would improve you," replied his brother-in-law enigmatically, after which Uncle Toto gave up all ideas of a discussion in his endeavor to decide what Monsieur Benoir had meant.

The *bisque* was followed by pompano, which was followed in turn by game, and so the feast progressed with an endless variety of delicacies. Also, there was the wine which was brought from the blackest part of Monsieur Benoir's cellar in bottles that were old and grimy, and laced with a tangle of cobwebs. And at the sight of each label the curé and Monsieur Suc would exclaim with astonishment and reverence.

Lucie was the life of the little party. Sitting proudly in her seat of honor, she laughed and talked so brightly that even Uncle Toto was forced to smile his approval, while Paul gazed at her in silent worship, scarce believing that this radiant creature could be his very own.

With the coming of the coffee the waiter bent down and whispered in Monsieur Benoir's ear.

"So," said he as he rose from his chair, "I told you that they would ask for me. Wait but a moment, and I will be with you again."

WHEN he returned a little later he found the party sitting silently around the table, in that pleasant state of relaxation which comes only after a hearty meal.

"Come, come," cried Monsieur Benoir, "this will never do. When I left you were chattering like a flock of magpies, and now I find you as silent as the dead. Come, the fun is only starting. And you, Paul, it is about time that you did something to amuse us, who have been like one in a dream the whole evening."

At this rebuke Paul removed his gaze from Lucie, and stared rather foolishly about him.

"It is true," he confessed, "I have been in a dream. A dream of happiness. But I am willing now to atone for it, if you will only show me the way."

He caught sight of the black violin, lying upon a sideboard.

"See," said he, as he rose from his chair, "there is the violin which, up to now, I had forgotten entirely. If you wish me to, I will play upon it for your amusement."

"*Bien*," replied his father, "it is high time that some one should suffer from your music besides myself."

"Yes, play, Paul," cried the others. "It is the very thing."

Lucie said nothing, but as she gazed at the black violin her brightness seemed to leave her, and she became suddenly very white and tired.

Raising the instrument to his side, Paul gave a little preliminary wave with his bow.

"I will first play a jig," said he laughingly, "and after that another one. And from then on I shall continue to play jigs, since they are the only pieces that I know."

He had scarcely played a dozen notes before Uncle Toto sprang from his chair with a snort of disdain.

"Hold, Paul," he cried, "you do not know what you are doing. Although I am no musician, I at least know how to hold a violin."

Lowering the instrument, Paul sought to explain.

"Yes, yes, I know," he began, "most people hold it——"

But Uncle Toto would not listen to him.

"Give it here and I will show you, who at least know that much," he cried, and seizing the violin he placed it beneath his chin.

"There," said he instructively, "that is the way to hold it. And this," he continued, "is the way to play."

Running his fingers violently up and down the fingerboard, he drew the bow clumsily across the strings so that they screamed as with demoniacal laughter.

At the sound Aunt Mimie screamed also, rising from her chair in sudden apprehension.

"Put it down at once, Toto," she ordered. "You should never have touched it. And you, Paul, put it back upon the sideboard or I assure you that I will stay no longer. Lucie is right. It is a horrid thing, with its black skull and its terrible laughing sound. Put it back, Paul, and as a reward I will take upon myself your task of amusing these people."

So Paul put back the instrument with no little chagrin at the manner in which his accomplishment had been received.

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Returning to the table, he listened in sullen silence to Aunt Mimie, who was striving to make good her promise of amusement by the recital of an early love-affair.

But despite the sprightliness of the tale, and the frequent angry interruptions of Uncle Toto, the company refused to be amused. Whether it was the continued influence of the feast, or the newer influence of the black violin, they sank into a still gloomier silence, and presently, as if by mutual consent, they all arose to go.

MONSIEUR BENOIR went through the alley with his guests, and when they came out upon the rue Royale he found it very hard to bid adieu to Paul.

"Good night, my son," said he huskily. "I shall miss you very much when I get up in the morning, and you must come early to the restaurant that I may not be lonesome for long. Good night, and God bless you. Perhaps now I shall be willing to leave the old place, after all."

Seizing Paul in his great arms he held him for a moment in a silent embrace, and then he hurried back into the alley, holding a suspicious hand before his eyes.

As for Paul, he could not trust himself to speak until he had turned into the rue Bourbon, and was close to the shop of Monsieur Suc.

"They are hard, these separations, are they not?" he asked, drawing Lucie more closely to him for comfort.

As he did so he looked into her face and gave a gasp of dismay.

"Lucie, Lucie," he cried, "you look completely worn out. You have done too much this day."

Lucie shook her head.

"No, Paul, it is not that," she answered. "I am a little tired, it is true, but I am also greatly worried."

"Worried?" asked Paul. "And why?"

For a moment Lucie gazed at the dark blot beneath Paul's arm, and when she answered him her voice had sunk to a faint whisper of dread.

"I am worried about your Uncle Toto," said she. "He should never have played upon the black violin."

Paul laughed reassuringly.

"Come, Lucie," he cried, "that is foolish. If you must worry about some one, then I should think that you would worry about me. Did I not also play upon it?"

But Lucie's only answer was to shake her head as she shrank against the protecting arm of her husband. Softly she patted his great strong hand, while Paul straightened himself with an unconscious gesture of pride and protection. Before them the street lay silent and deserted save for the stooping figure of Monsieur Suc, who fumbled sleepily at the door of the shop.

With a little sigh of contentment, Paul hurried forward to help him, taking a fresh grip upon the violin beneath his arm. It was then that he remembered his unanswered question, and he smiled compassionately as he thought of how overwrought Lucie must be, to think of such things in this moment of peace and happiness.

"And did I not also play upon it?" he asked again.

This time Lucie gave him a little nod of assent.

"Yes, Paul, you did," she replied, "but not in the same way."

CHAPTER XI

AN EARLY MORNING CALL

ON ACCOUNT of the age and the quantity of the wine that he had taken at the feast of Monsieur Benoir, it is probable that Monsieur Suc would have overslept himself the following morning, had he been undisturbed.

At first he thought that the noise was the outcome of some nightmare, and turning over, he prepared himself for another nap. But the noise kept on so clearly and so persistently that finally he sat up in bed and tried to locate it. For a moment he listened in the faint hope that he might still be dreaming, and then he slipped from the covers with an exclamation of impatience.

Yes, there could be no doubt about it now. Some one was knocking upon the door of the shop.

As he dressed himself, Monsieur Suc looked at the clock and saw that the hands stood at his usual hour for rising.

"And can I not even oversleep myself for once?" he muttered angrily as he pattered from the room.

Unbarring the door of the shop, he half opened it and peeped forth inquiringly.

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"Well?" he began severely, "may I ask what you wish at this hour?"

And then he gave a sudden gasp of astonishment, and threw the door wide open, for standing upon the sidewalk was Monsieur Benoir, white and haggard and with but a part of his clothes upon him.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried Monsieur Suc. "What is it?"

For a moment, Monsieur Benoir's agitation prevented him from replying. Leaning heavily against the doorway, he pointed a trembling finger up the street, while his lips worked nervously with the words that he could not say. Pale, disheveled, and half-clad, he was a very different person from the jolly, well-groomed *restaurateur* who had entertained his guests so royally the night before.

"What is it?" cried Monsieur Suc again. "Speak quickly, I implore you."

With a sudden heave of his great body through the doorway, Monsieur Benoir found his voice.

"Toto is dead!" said he in a hoarse whisper, and dropped limply into a chair.

FOR a moment the familiar objects of the shop swam in a misty haze before the eyes of Monsieur Suc. Gripping the edge of a show-case he tried to steady himself, while the haze took on a definite shape which was strangely like the grinning head-piece of the black violin.

So he had been right, after all. Through some miracle Paul had been saved—Paul alone. Poor Uncle Toto—he had died even sooner than the rest.

There was no doubt in Monsieur Suc's mind as to the cause of Uncle Toto's death, and yet he felt that he must at least go through the form of questioning Monsieur Benoir. Calming himself as best he could, he essayed a look of anxious inquiry.

"But that is sad," said he. "And what was the trouble? He seemed well enough last night."

At this question Monsieur Benoir sat upright with a little gasp of surprise. Could it be possible that Monsieur Suc did not suspect the violin? And if he did not suspect it, why should he, Monsieur Benoir, be so ready to do so?

The thought reassured him so that he became conscious for the first time that he was without his collar and necktie. Raising a hand, Monsieur Benoir fumbled uneasily at his bare throat.

"How should I know the cause of his death?" he answered. "The message came by Berard, the carpenter, while I was dressing, and I hurried at once to tell you. Mimie arose early this morning as she wished to attend the first mass, and when she looked at Toto she found him dead beside her. She was naturally wild with grief and excitement. She says——"

He broke off suddenly as the thought came to him that Paul, his son, had brought the violin to the restaurant the night before.

"She says all sorts of things," he continued lamely. "As for myself, I know that Toto's digestion has been very bad for the past five years."

"And the dinner last night was very heavy?" suggested Monsieur Suc.

"Very," agreed Monsieur Benoir. "Especially the *bisque*. *Mon Dieu!* but it was heavy!"

"Poor Toto," sighed Monsieur Suc.

"Poor Toto," sighed his visitor, and a silence fell upon the two men pregnant with the suspicion that haunted them.

For a good five minutes neither of them spoke, while the dark shadows of the shop gave way to the morning sunlight, and the tramping of the early workers came unceasingly from outside.

SUDDENLY Monsieur Suc gave a start of terror, and hurried across the shop.

"Paul!" he cried, following the trend of his thoughts. "He played upon it last night for the second time!"

In the mind of Monsieur Benoir there was now no hesitation. The thought had been spoken and his son was in danger. Rising hastily he was about to follow Monsieur Suc to the living-room when Paul appeared in the doorway.

"How is this, *mon Père?*" began Paul in a teasing tone. "Are you then so lonesome for me that you can not even wait until——"

He stopped abruptly to stare in amazement at the appearance of his father.

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked in an altered tone.

"It is Toto. He is dead!" said Monsieur Benoir, still fumbling unconsciously at his bare throat.

There was a cry of horror from the living-room as Lucie hurried to her husband's side.

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"Paul, Paul," she sobbed, "what did I tell you? Why did you ever take the violin?"

"Yes, yes," assented Monsieur Suc dully. "It was the violin, Paul. I tell you it was the violin."

Paul's face went white, but he squared his wide shoulders with a sudden determination.

"Wait until we know," said he firmly. "Then it will be time to speak of the violin. Our first duty is to Aunt Mimie, who must know nothing of this suspicion until we have had time to investigate it."

At his words Monsieur Benoir gave a start of remembrance.

"But Mimie knows," he cried excitedly. "Berard told me. She is wild—crazy. She swears that M'sieu Suc killed Jean Edwarde also, and that she will go to his wife, Olive. She swears that she will bring Olive here and tear down the shop about your ears. Of course she can not do these things, but she can come here and make a terrible scene, and I only came in for a moment to warn you before going to stop her. Come, Paul, we must go at once to the house of Jean Edwarde."

And paying no heed to the anxious inquiries of Monsieur Suc, he started for the door.

Half-way across the room he paused and held up his hand for attention.

"Listen," said he, and as he spoke there came to those in the shop a faint murmur of voices from outside.

Hurrying out upon the sidewalk, Monsieur Benoir gave one quick glance up the street and retreated into the shop again. His face was white, but his eyes were bright with courage and determination.

"Go to your room at once, Lucie," said he quietly, "and do not return until I tell you to do so."

Then, as the girl stood motionless with amazement, he bore her to the threshold of the living-room, thrust her inside, and locked the door.

"There," said he, turning with the key in his hand, "that is better."

"But what is the matter? What do you mean?" asked Paul confusedly, staring at the door through which Lucie had been so unceremoniously thrust.

Still panting from his recent exertions, Monsieur Benoir pointed to the street.

"Go out there and you will see," said he grimly. "I am later than I feared, for Mimie is coming with Olive!"

He paused and looked at Paul, with his kindly face drawn into an anxious frown.

"And with them there is a crowd," he continued in a low voice. "A crowd of excited people. This looks like mischief, Paul."

AGAIN he paused, while the noise outside swelled into an angry, sullen roar, accompanied by a steady undertone of swiftly tramping feet. Along the street doors were slamming and people were calling excitedly in French, while high above it all rose the shrill wail of an hysterical woman.

With a cry of dismay, Monsieur Suc sprang to the door and tried with trembling hands to put the heavy bar in place. But Paul thrust him gently aside.

"Wait, m'sieu," said he. "This is my affair. When I brought the violin to the restaurant I said that if there was any sin it should fall upon my own head, so I alone am to blame. Let me talk to Aunt Mimie and these friends of hers who have come to destroy us."

Planting himself firmly in the open doorway he threw off his coat and began to roll up his shirt-sleeves so as to leave his great arms bare.

For a moment he looked at the show-window, where the night before he had returned the violin to its place beside the clock of Louis Philippe.

"I wonder?" he whispered, and shook his head with doubt.

Then he looked at the crowd which was almost upon him, and smiled, with the lust of battle in his eyes.

"So," said he softly, "we shall see."

CHAPTER XII

THE DEVOTION OF P'TIT JOE

WHEN Aunt Mimie arrived a few moments later, the crowd behind her had increased in size and unruliness until now it was almost a fair-sized mob.

After her first wild outburst of grief and denunciation the widow of Uncle Toto had become dangerously quiet. Swiftly and silently she had gone to the widow of Jean Edwarde and had told her in no uncertain manner that the blood of her husband was

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crying out for vengeance. And in Olive she had found a ready listener.

Olive had heard the story of the violin from at least a dozen people the week before, but then she had paid little attention to it. Such stories, started each day in the neighborhood, were discussed frantically for a week or two, and were then forgotten entirely. Also, Monsieur Suc was one who should be above suspicion.

But when Aunt Mimie came to her, widowed like herself and frantic with grief, the memory of Jean Edwarde came back to her in a flood of sorrow and bitterness, and she was ready to believe anything.

Five minutes after her visitor had entered her little home she was crying out for vengeance and preparing to accompany Aunt Mimie to the shop of Monsieur Suc. What they were to do when they arrived there, Aunt Mimie herself did not know. They thought only of revenge—revenge swift and complete.

And so they had gone on, quietly at first and then with increasing excitement as the people of the neighborhood rallied to their ranks. At each moment of their progress they would meet some friend hurrying to market and this friend would stop to ask them where they were going. Then Aunt Mimie would gasp out a shrill explanation, and the friend would follow along to receive further information from some other friend who had joined the ranks a while before.

At first these friends had begged the two frantic women to return quietly to their homes, telling them of the serious consequences that were apt to follow if they persisted in their madness. But Aunt Mimie had turned a deaf ear to their remonstrances and the friends had gone along, still pleading their cause in vain.

WHEN they reached the rue Bourbon the recruits joined them blindly, knowing only that there was a crowd, that it was going somewhere, and that they were liable to miss something if they did not go also. And now a different element began to show itself—an element that needed but a word to turn the excited little crowd into a mob. Newsboys hurried with their papers from the corners, rough-looking men came out of the newly opened saloons, and the cart-drivers turned their horses into the side streets, where they left them to join the throng.

As it passed the shop of Monsieur Lapet, the jeweler rushed out upon the sidewalk and hurried after it, his glass still stuck tightly in his eye.

"Come along," he shouted as he went by the shop of P'tit Joe, and the little tailor, throwing his shears into a corner, ran as fast as his legs could carry him.

And so when Aunt Mimie finally reached the shop of Monsieur Suc there was quite a crowd behind her.

At the sight of Paul standing huge and forbidding in the doorway, the crowd fell back and formed a rough circle with Aunt Mimie in its center. As it did so a sudden hush fell upon it, and in the silence Aunt Mimie screamed loudly, for she had caught sight of Monsieur Suc.

Standing inside the circle of excited people, her face convulsed with grief and rage, she pointed toward the little curio-dealer and shrieked her accusation.

"There he is!" she cried wildly. "There is the murderer! Three men has he killed, and nothing has been done to him because he is M'sieu Suc. The good M'sieu Suc. The pious M'sieu Suc, who is so honored by all. But I tell you that he is a fiend—a companion of the Evil One! All day he sits and reads in his great wicked book, seeking how he may destroy his friends, and when he has learned, he destroys them. Froissart, he calls it, and history of the olden days. Well, so let it be. And do you know what they did to such as he in those olden days? Wait until I have dragged him forth and I will show you!"

Pausing, she sprang furiously toward the door, to be met by the cool, level glance of Paul.

"Aunt Mimie," said he quietly, "you must go home at once. You do not know what you are saying or doing. You must go home at once; do you understand? I will go with you."

TURNING to the crowd again, Aunt Mimie raised a trembling hand on high as though she would bring down the curse of Heaven upon her nephew's head. Wild and disheveled, her eyes blazing with hate and rage, she seemed to have not the slightest resemblance to the plump, vivacious wife of Uncle Toto.

And yet at heart Aunt Mimie was the

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best of women. Hysterical now, and crazed with grief and despair, she gave full vent to her Gallic emotions and knew not what she did.

"What!" she screamed, "has my own flesh and blood turned against me? Well, I might have known. In this house of Satan all must be evil. But come, let us drag them out, all of them, and give them the punishment that they deserve. They are murderers, I tell you. Did they not kill my husband, and a stranger, and Jean Edwarde? See! here is his wife, who will bear me witness that this is so."

And seizing Olive by the shoulder she thrust her forth from where she shrank against the edge of the crowd.

But Olive had come to her senses. At first she had gone along blindly, thinking only of the terrible story of the woman beside her, seeking only for revenge. But as her friends had pleaded with her she had gradually grown calmer, until, when she reached the shop of Monsieur Suc, she had wished that she had not come, and had sought to efface herself in the crowd. Now, as she looked at the sullen, brutal faces that were scattered thick about her, she suddenly realized that the affair was apt to become as serious as she had at first hoped it would be.

Laying a hand upon Aunt Mimie's shoulder, Olive gently forced her back toward the edge of the crowd.

"Come, Mimie," said she, "we have both done wrong in coming here and I have just realized it. If M'sieu Suc is guilty of these crimes, surely the law can deal with him. That is the best way. Come, let us go home."

For a moment there was a tense silence, while Aunt Mimie stared at her in furious amazement. In the hush a policeman, who had been eying the crowd uneasily from the opposite side of the street, took a step forward, changed his mind, and hurried off after reinforcements. Then Aunt Mimie found her voice in a long shriek of rage and disappointment.

"God," she cried, "is every one against me? Must I do it all myself? Think of your husband, Olive. Will you let his death go unavenged? Go then to your shame!"

Throwing Olive from her with a force that sent her reeling, Aunt Mimie turned appealingly to the crowd.

"You?" she screamed. "You? Are you all against me? Is there not one among you who can call himself man enough to take my part?"

At this there came a sullen roar from the crowd and some one threw an orange at Paul. It burst against the doorway, leaving a great dripping patch of yellow upon the dark woodwork.

AS THOUGH this was the signal for action, Paul stepped on to the sidewalk and seized Aunt Mimie in his arms. Despite her shrieks and struggling, he thrust her through the doorway and into the arms of Monsieur Benoir, who was waiting there to receive her. At the same moment Monsieur Lapet seized Olive and pushed her hurriedly through the crowd.

"Help! help!" cried Aunt Mimie hysterically from the shop. "They will kill me also!"

With a sudden surge the crowd pressed forward, its inside edge now formed by the roughs who had joined it in the rue Bourbon. Upon its outside edge the first comers were quietly stealing away, for they had no wish to take part in the trouble that was brewing.

Springing back into the doorway, Paul looked at the circle of angry faces unflinchingly.

"You had better go now, all of you," said he with quiet determination. "This matter does not concern you in the least, and you have no right to block the entrance of this shop."

His words were greeted with a gust of laughter, for the crowd was now beginning to enjoy itself. Among those who remained there was hardly one who had the slightest knowledge of what the excitement was about, yet they were satisfied. Here was a shop to be destroyed, a man to be beaten. What more could they ask?

"You had better go now," repeated Paul, when the laughter had subsided. "You may think that this matter is funny, but I assure you that it will be serious when the police arrive."

"—— the police. We want that woman," growled some one in the crowd.

"Yes, and quick at that, you —— Frenchy," said another with a strong Irish brogue, and a second orange struck Paul full in the chest.

With a bellow of rage he sprang at the man, and in a moment pandemonium

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reigned. In the same spirit of cheerful eagerness with which it had started the trouble, the crowd pushed forward to meet Paul, those who were not close enough to strike him starting a fight among themselves. Loud rose the din of cries, and curses, and dully thudding blows, punctuated with the sharp cracking of broken glass, as those who were not engaged in the actual fighting sought to demolish the shop.

Bricks and cobblestones and pieces of refuse crashed through the show-window and through the open door, while Monsieur Benoir, with the assistance of Monsieur Suc, dragged the screaming Aunt Mimie to a place of safety.

AND then, high above the noise of the fighting, came a clear, piercing shriek of anguish, as P'tit Joe darted through the thickest of the *mêlée* and came into the shop.

"The clock!" he cried. "The clock! It will be destroyed!"

Rushing to the broken show-window where it stood in the direct line of fire, he threw himself before it and raised his voice in entreaty.

"The clock!" he cried again. "The clock of Louis Philippe! Stop, you fools, or you will destroy it!"

A stone struck him upon the chest and sent him staggering backward, but still he called distractedly, waving his arms in impotent despair, until amid a shower of carefully aimed missiles he fell crashing into the show-window and was still. And then, with a warning clatter, the police raced around the corner, and the affair was over.

It had lasted but a little time, yet it had accomplished much.

Within the shop, amid a scattered wreckage of splintered glass and cobblestones, Paul stood with Lucie held tight in his arms, the broken lock of the living-room door speaking eloquently of his wife's eagerness to see him. Paul's face was cut and bruised, and his clothes were torn to rags, but his eyes still shone with the lust of battle, and he held himself proudly with the dignity of the unconquered.

"It was a pretty good fight for a Frenchy, Lucie," said he.

Over in one corner Monsieur Suc was assisting Monsieur Benoir to drag Aunt Mimie from behind a barricade, hastily improvised with some chairs and a showcase. Aunt Mimie was quiet now, for her excitement had left her at the first approach of danger. Scared, cowed, and thoroughly repentant, she gazed at the destruction about her in terrified surprise.

"I was mad! I was mad!" she moaned weakly. "And is Paul dead also? Mother of God, what have I done?"

And over by the show-window the curé, who had arrived at the last moment, tenderly raised the senseless form of P'tit Joe from where it lay in silent protection beside the clock of Louis Philippe.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MESSAGE OF GIOVITO

IT WAS not until he had revived P'tit Joe, and had gone to look into the condition of his beloved clock, that the curé discovered the destruction of the black violin. The little tailor had fallen full upon the instrument in his defense of the show-window, and he had shattered it beyond any possible hope of repair.

Calling to the others to draw near him, the curé began hastily to separate the mass of splinters that had been the belly of the violin. Suddenly he gave a warning cry and his fingers worked cautiously, for his eye had caught a sudden glint of steel.

"See," said he, "I think that I have found the murderer."

And then, amid a murmur of excited inquiry, he tore away the lower half of the shattered belly, disclosing a slender bar of rigid steel. Straight through the neck-block ran the bar and down the center of the violin, until at its lower end it turned leftward at a sharp angle and ran up close beneath a little inlaid fragment that still adhered to the instrument's edge.

For a moment the curé gazed at the fragment, and then he gave an exclamation of surprise.

"See," said he again, and the others, following the direction of his gaze, saw a curious inequality in the violin's lower side. At first it seemed but a trifling thickness in the wood, and then as they looked closer they saw that it was a narrow strip of parchment, folded once and colored to the dark shade of the instrument's inside by the varnish with which it was held in place.

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Amid an expectant silence the curé unfastened the parchment and spread out its single fold. Swiftly he glanced at the close, irregular writing with which its face was covered, and then he turned to the others with a gasp of horror.

"It is in Italian," said he hoarsely, and began to translate:

To you who find this:

Know now that jealousy is the reason for my deed—jealousy of that which, being unable to destroy, I must leave behind. Many shall know the delights of my treasure, but not for long, for they must pay for the knowledge with their lives. To the ignorant, to the uninstructed, the violin is harmless; for who can be jealous of those who can not understand?

But let those who would play take warning from the head-piece and beware, for when they reach the fifth position they are doomed.

Thus do I Giovito, write in the city of Cremona, ere I hasten the death that is slowly creeping upon me.

The curé's voice sank to a whisper as he finished reading, and for a long time, unmindful of those about him, he stared in silence at the faded writing in his hand.

ONCE more he was back in Italy, in the monastery of his youth, amid the olive-groves and the gleaming blue of the sea and sky. Clearly he could see the old Italian as he gazed out upon the walls of ancient Cremona and wrote his final message to the world. How bitterly, how jealously, he must have thought of his treasure before he hid his terrible handiwork and left his terrible legacy of revenge. Ah! The curé knew these old Italians, and he could almost understand.

And then he thought of the horror of it—of the ghastly, hidden horror of it, through all the years.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the curé, and the parchment shook in his trembling hand. "This is hard to comprehend, my children," he went on unsteadily. "The man was mad—he must have been mad even to have thought of such a thing. In all my life I have never heard of anything so wicked, so terrible, so diabolically cruel!"

"Yes, yes," assented Monsieur Suc, in a whisper of fear. "But I do not understand. Tell me, *mon Père.* How was it done?"

Carefully raising the violin, the curé tested the rod with an inquiring finger.

"So," said he after a moment. "I think now that I understand. They played upon them often in the monastery, and I ought to know.

"See," he continued, holding the violin well away from his body. "This is the fifth position, and in coming to it from any of the other positions before, one's hand must strike for the first time upon the neck-plate of the instrument. Look now at the little fragment which still remains upon the left side of the lower edge."

Closely his listeners watched while the curé slipped down his fingers once more into the fifth position, and as he did so they cried out with dread and understanding. For, as the hand touched the neck plate of the violin, there flashed from the dark center of one of the little inlaid dots a tiny point. For an instant it showed, and then was gone with the swiftness of a serpent's tongue.

"So—so—that was the way?" faltered Monsieur Suc.

"That was the way," replied the curé. "The point touched the player lightly, just beneath the chin, and left no mark, no scratch—only a tiny bit of the venom with which it is smeared."

"God!" muttered Paul shakily. "And suppose that I had played upon it in the usual manner?"

Seizing Lucie with a grip of iron, he hid his face upon her shoulder and shook, in all his youth and strength, with the dreadful thought of what might have been.

"Ah, m'sieu, m'sieu!" cried Aunt Mimie brokenly. "How can you ever forgive me?"

Waving a hand in protest, Monsieur Suc again turned to the curé.

"I see it all now, save one thing," said he. "Although you never heard it played, there was a certain strange note about the music of the violin. A note that was beautiful yet dreadful, like the laugh of some evil being. How do you account for that, *mon Père?*"

The curé gave a little shudder.

"Perhaps it was the rod of steel. Perhaps it was old Giovito himself. Who knows?" answered he.

"Who knows?" echoed Monsieur Suc, and, taking the violin from the curé's hand, he went to the fireplace at one end of the shop. Here he searched among the neglected materials for the morning's fire, until he found a newspaper, and carefully wrapping it about the violin, he laid the

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instrument upon the dead coals of the night before.

"As you came, so shall you go," he muttered as he touched a light to the newspaper's ragged edge.

Silently he watched the flames leap and curl until the last black splinter had fallen in ashes, and the carven head-piece had glowed with its true color of Satanic red.

"So," said he, "it is all over, my friends, and if we can, we must forget."

HE PAUSED and pointed to the wreckage with which the floor was strewn.

"See," he continued, "all about us are the tokens of its evil doings, but before the sun has set, the shop will be swept clean and they will be cast away. So must we strive to sweep clean our minds and cast away this terrible recollection, which can only cause us unhappiness."

Again he paused, and this time he looked admiringly toward the chair where P'tit Joe sat holding his injured head in his hands.

"And to think," said Monsieur Suc softly, "that it was through the bravery of our little friend the tailor that we learned the truth of this terrible danger. Ah, P'tit Joe, we have much to thank you for!"

With the eyes of all upon him, P'tit Joe squirmed uneasily and turned away his face that they might not see the great red bruise upon his forehead.

"I did nothing, believe me," he murmured modestly. "I knew nothing of the violin. I thought only of the clock of Louis Philippe."

"Ah, yes, the clock," said Monsieur Suc.

And leaving the fireplace he went over to where it stood in the broken show-window.

Lifting the heavy mass of bronze, he staggered with it across the shop, while the little tailor looked at him fearfully, his eyes wide with awe and reverence.

Then Monsieur Suc bent down and placed the clock in the arms of P'tit Joe.

"For you," said he.

THE CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE FOR READERS, WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS

GEORGE S. REED, author of the serial "Silver-Shoes," and Samuel B. Dinkelspiel, author of "Tomagno Tells a Tale," are both at home in the jewelry trade, one wholesale, the other retail. In the latter tale the story within the story actually happened to the writer's grandfather in the sixties, he being the agent chosen to carry the gold. As to Mr. Reed, though born and bred in Boston, any one who has delved into the dusty pages of Esquemeling, buccaneer and prince of pirate biographers, will see at once that Mr. Reed's stirring tale gives both a reliable as well as vivid account of Morgan's raid across the Isthmus.

THIS from Dwight L. Loughborough concerning "A Sprig of Holly:"

There *was* a lad like Percy Darlington. His fate was that of the trumpeter in my story. And there was a sergeant like McKittrick. Unless somebody has broken his neck in a saloon brawl, he still lives—and probably is known as a good soldier!

Also note the scout in this story; he, too, is real. And you will meet him again.

A CHANGE among the office members of the Camp-Fire is probably of some interest to the members in general, particularly to those who know, personally or by correspondence, the men concerned. To the very sincere regret of all in the office, Mr. George S. Olds, for the last year and a half associate editor of ADVENTURE, has found it advisable to take up work outside the publishing field. He remains, nevertheless, an enthusiastic member of the Camp-Fire.

Sinclair Lewis, his successor, formerly assistant editor of *Transatlantic Tales*, literary adviser of Frederick A. Stokes

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Company and author of numerous aeroplane stories, takes up the work with equal enthusiasm and is already known to many Camp-Fire members. Mr. Lewis is an old friend of my own; we have worked together before, and I introduce him with pleasure to the rest of ADVENTURE's family.

AS OUR magazine becomes better and better known throughout the world-wide field of adventure, we are getting into personal touch with an ever-increasing number of those who themselves have penetrated into the hidden places or taken part in the great, throbbing game of "your life or mine." Every morning I open my mail with eagerness, and having read it, find it hard to bring myself down to the routine of the day. Here are some random samples from the letters that drift in to ADVENTURE from all over the round old world. I think you will read them as eagerly as I have done, and be as glad for these glimpses into lives that answer lustily to the bugle-call summoning Restless Spirits to the rough but splendid paths of risk and danger.

And you, too, will be pleased that our Camp-Fire is becoming more and more the clearing-house for these same Restless Spirits—a means of finding the shortest trails to real adventure, of getting track of a lost comrade, of securing fellow adventurers for some special quest, or of talking over with others who have known them, places and times and people still vivid and alluring in memory's pages.

THE Camp-Fire has grown to be a bigger, broader and better thing than I had ventured to hope or dream in the beginning, for the rest of you have entered into its spirit and are giving it what I could not possibly give it alone. That is, the Camp-Fire is what it should be—not my department, but *ours*. It is the one place in the world where every adventurer is welcome and where all who love adventure can gather to ask questions or to answer them, to talk over old times or plan new tilts with fate, to make new friends or once more grasp the hands of old ones.

It is *our* Camp-Fire, not mine. And whenever you have an idea you think will make our meetings more useful or enjoyable, give it to the rest of us.

Here are the letters I was speaking of when I interrupted myself by talking:

Have been traveling since I was sixteen. I sailed second mate on a deep-water ship before I was twenty, and mate when I was twenty-one. And have followed a number of different occupations ashore in between voyages. Was in the Boer War; Madero's army. I also watched the fun in Japan.

I was in Melbourne, Australia, when the Russo-Japanese War commenced. There was a Jap. boat there, the *Kumano Maru*, in port at the time, but would not take passengers back with her, so I stowed away in her. I thought at the time I was alone. As soon as we got to sea I showed up on deck to find thirty-seven more to keep me company!

By the way, I have met Charley Williams in Honolulu, the hero of "The Law of Bonham." I have met several kindred spirits at different times, but it is hard to keep track of them when we are all sailing separate courses. I could tell an interesting yarn or two, but I'm no writer.

If you know of any one wanting a live partner, you can send them my way. I'm never too busy to travel, no matter what for or where to. Here's to your success.

THE following from Chatham, Ontario, also suggested subjects for two good articles for ADVENTURE, and, like the others given here, contained some kind words for the magazine, which I naturally appreciate highly and have acknowledged by letter, but which do not belong in the Camp-Fire:

Personally I like the articles best, and, having lived in Rhodesia for two years after the war, I frequently come across names which were common talk out there at that time—Mayes, Ross, Grant and others, and I tell you they were *men!* I never got into any bad scrap myself, except to have my thumb smashed to —— by a Kafir and a Mauser that he did not know how to use, or he would have hit the place my brains are supposed to be. But I guess I have got as many to read the ADVENTURE as most, for I always hand it on to some fellow when I get through, and always find that they make a point of getting the next one. . . . Well, I am no hand at writing or I would have done this a year ago, so I will quit, wishing you every success.

I remain, yours truly, JOHN C. ASHTON.

THE next letter brings up Algot Lange and his expedition to the Amazon under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania Museum:

. . . And your article on Mr. Algot Lange interested me greatly. In your announcement I note that you state Mr. Lange was the only white man who had any knowledge of the interior of South America. Please understand me when I say that I have no wish to take away any credit from Mr. Lange, neither am I an aspirant for publicity, but I wished to correct your statement in regard to there being no other white men who have an intimate knowledge of the interior of South America. Mr. Louis Preston (who is now in South Africa) and

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myself put in four years there looking for the "Lost Tribe."

Mr. Preston and myself were both in the employ of the Cerro de Pasco Mining Company, in Peru, as accountants. One evening in the Mowry Hotel, in Lima, Peru, we were told a story by an old man who called himself by the name of ——, although that was not his true name, for he was one of the men "who can't come back." —— had been down there for twenty-five years, and was known to be very wealthy. Once a year he went off by himself and was away for five months and always returned and went straight to the bank and unloaded his llamas and took the packs into the bank.

He would never talk to any one very much, but one evening he told Mr. Preston and myself that he was the only white man living who had ever seen the "Lost Tribe." You have probably heard more or less about the white race who are supposed to live down there somewhere. He told us that he did not dare tell us where this tribe was, but he told us many queer incidents and customs of these people.

IN CONSEQUENCE, Mr. Preston and I left Lima on October 9, 1903, and went to Oroya by train, and from that time until April 30, 1907, we were exploring that whole interior. We followed a course from Lima to the Atlantic and swung north about two hundred miles north of Para, and back west to the Pacific. From Quito, Ecuador, we swung southeast to Iquitos and then up the Ucayali to Porto Jessupi, and again swung northeast until we hit the Amazon above Manaos. We explored the Ucayali from above Iquitos to its source. Also the Rio Negro, and many of the other streams.

We had been told that the "Lost Tribe" lived in a great valley and that a large river flowed through it. Many of the wandering Indians we met showed us that we were the first real white men they had ever seen, although they spoke in a vague way of the "Malos Cholos" as being of a light color, and I am inclined to believe that they had reference to the Mangeromas Mr. Lange speaks of.

Mr. Preston is in South Africa at present, but we have determined to return to South America after he returns to the United States, as we made several interesting discoveries which we will more fully investigate as soon as we have secured sufficient capital to see us through. We have had to give up twice because of our financial condition. For verification of my statements in this letter, I refer you to Dr. C. H. King, at Iquitos, Peru; also Mr. Richard R. Neill, Secretary of American Legation at Lima, Peru; also Mr. John Armstrong, American Consular Agent at Manaos, Brazil. Mr. Preston and I made many maps, etc., for our own reference, and, without being egotistical, I do say that there are no other white men in the world who know South America as we do, for I fully believe that we explored every stream in the section I bounded out in the first portion of my letter.

I am fully convinced, however, of the veracity of ——, for Mr. Preston and I gathered sufficient evidence to convince us that there is a white race of people living there, hidden away from the rest of the world. I am at present the Joint Accountant for the A., T. & S. F. Ry., the Western Pacific R.R., and the Northwestern Pacific R.R. Co. Any information which is in my power to give you, you are liberty to command me. My only idea in writing you was to correct the impression that there was but one American who knew considerable about the topographical sections of South America.

Yours very truly,

W. R. HOWETT.

HERE are two letters from Mr. Lange himself, putting us in touch with the delayed progress of his expedition:

Our expedition has been delayed, first on account of the necessary repairs on our vessel, which have not been completed yet, and second on account of my arrangements with the representatives of the Brazilian Federal Government.

My plans are these: I am to leave New York, definitely, on the S.S. *Vestris* of the Lamport & Holt, on December 28th, for Rio de Janeiro, accompanied by Admiral José Carvalho of the Brazilian Navy. This distinguished gentleman, who has taken a great deal of interest in our expedition, has obtained the interest and coöperation of the Brazilian Government and has obtained for me some conferences to be given for the scientific societies of Rio de Janeiro. An audience with the President of the United States of Brazil has also been obtained, when I am to explain the object of our expedition, and in this manner we will obtain the hearty and intimate coöperation in all our enterprises and movements while in Brazilian territory.

It has taken me a long time to work this out, and I am now resting back in my chair, assured that a good month's work has been done. Then, after I get through with Rjo de Janeiro, we will go up the Brazilian coast as far as Para, right under the Equator, where the steamer will meet us and I will then go on board with Admiral Carvalho, who will act as our official escort during our Amazon exploration. He will open all these rivers for our party—rivers that otherwise are closed for any foreign steamer; he will obtain the courtesies of the captains of these different frontier and interior stations; will obtain food on a Federal requisition whenever needed, and also procure men for us when we have to undertake difficult inland journeys over the waterfalls. O.K.?

. . . I have received in all 387 letters of application for the job of general assistant. I have picked my two best men *from the ranks of your readers:*

I. Dr. Franklin Church, Boonville, N. Y.

II. Sandy McNab (former chief of police in a town in Arizona).

I hope that they will prove good, hardy, steady, calm men of superior nerve and mental balance and determination.

You might state that it would be impossible for me to answer all inquiries. Some are stupid, some are good, real good, and some simply ask for "full particulars," but the general run is good, and I am glad to see that there are so many good men in the U. S. A. The day *may* come when I need several hundreds of men to go down with me to the Amazon and "do things." Sincerely, ALGOT LANGE.

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THE following refers to the serial with a stenographic title, recently completed in ADVENTURE—"The Adventures of a Stenographer: A Romance of New York and Teheran." And later I hope he'll tell us about that adventure in Hong Kong.

. . . of a kind to stir the pulse of a world wanderer, which I was for a time in an amateur way. I have the record for speed in belting this gray old planet to the west, having made that tour in forty-six days although two men from Phoenix, Arizona, are said to have belted the world to the west in forty days; but the trip is reported to be as yet to be authenticated as to full detail. Especially I was stirred by the allusions in the story to Hong Kong, where I had a little adventure of my own one Winter day. Very truly yours,

DANIEL D. BIDWELL.

THE next letter is only one of many of similar tenor. Whenever we can be of service in telling a Restless Spirit how to find the "trouble" he is looking for, we give that service freely. Which does not mean that we either advise him to look for it or assume any responsibility. Nor does it always mean that we can put him in touch with the right people. Nor anything else except that we like to help our comrades of the Camp-Fire whenever we can.

In one case I remember that the old adventurer to whom we referred a young aspirant for trouble advised him against seeking it. And it was one of the most sincere and manly letters I have ever read. In another case a man whose special training peculiarly fitted him for that field of endeavor was advised to substitute work in the slums of a great city for the more alluring but less useful kind of trouble he was looking for.

Several inquiries after "rough houses" were referred to Arthur D. Howden Smith, whose personal experience articles on "Fighting the Turk in Macedonia" appeared in ADVENTURE over a year ago. Through some mishap—a cheerfully careless office-boy, I think, though it may have been in the case of some Mexican letters that the office-boy played his part—the letters forwarded to Mr. Smith failed to reach him until he was in the swirl of preparations to leave for the Balkans as war correspondent of the New York *Post*. I do not yet know whether Mr. Smith found time to answer them. He 'phoned to me that he would gladly do so if he could possibly snatch a few minutes out of his few remaining hours, but the next time he rang my 'phone it was to say a hurried good-by at the last moment and I didn't have the heart to press the matter.

THAT was only two weeks ago, and the war of the Balkans against Turkey was barely under way. Big things have already happened there since then, and the Allies are to-day storming the last line of defenses outside of Constantinople. I wonder what will have come to pass in Europe by the time this reaches your eyes?

I venture no prophecy. I am disgusted with the prophet business. I did a perfectly good prophecy for the Camp-Fire several months ago and the blamed thing went and came true before that issue of the magazine reached the news-stands. Our office records show that on August 9 I sent up to the printer an inside tip I had from a Greek friend in touch with the Balkan Committee to the effect that the Balkan States were going to do just what they have since done—unite at last and jump on Turkey. At that time there wasn't a word of war-talk in the papers. No hint of the coming alliance. My tip was strictly inside information and as a prophecy it was a corker. It was so good that, if it had been published right then, nobody would have believed it. I couldn't have got eight cents for it from a newspaper, and yet it was a world-beater.

Well, those of you who know how long before publication date a magazine has to be made up will sympathize with me. That issue of ADVENTURE went on sale November 3d. By that time the blooming prophecy had already begun to come true, and my little forecast looked like a post-mortem. Cassandra had nothing on me for trouble in the prophecy line.

But here's the letter. Excuse me for telling my own troubles.

Reading your account of the histories of some of your contributors, it occurred to me that you might be able to assist me to a position in connection with some command for service in Mexico.

Can you put me in communication with any one organizing such a command? If you can not, will you kindly tell me to whom I would better address myself?

The matter is one of indifference to me on which side I serve, as . . . and wish to find something that will keep my mind occupied all the time.

I am a surgeon with several years' hospital experience and feel fully competent to fill a position of this kind in connection with army service.

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Any assistance that you can give me will be gratefully accepted and held in the strictest confidence. Respectfully, ———

IN THE November Camp-Fire we had a letter from a man (name and address not given, at his request) who backed up Algot Lange's ideas on the subject of fifty-foot snakes, told of his sufferings in the South American interior, of his finding gold there and of his intention to return. Letters for him have been coming in ever since, asking to be put in communication with him. They have, of course, been forwarded. Here are a few of them:

CHICAGO, Illinois.

I read the letter from the man who said Mr. Lange would no doubt find the fifty-foot snakes in the Amazon country, because he (the writer), having seen them, knew they were there. He also mentioned his intention of equipping an expedition to go after the gold in a lake he knows of down there.

I have been wondering if he could use one or two men. One is myself; I can drive and repair automobiles and gas engines. The other man is a friend of mine who is as familiar with automobiles and gas engines as I am, and in addition can design, build and drive any type of aeroplane. We are both very anxious to go if we can be of any use.

Thanking you in advance, I remain, Yours truly,
R. B. STICKELMAN.

I should like if possible to get into communication with him, if he has no objections.

I am something of an adventurer myself and am always glad to know any one who has traveled. I have been around the world myself once, although it was some time ago, and have a few good stories I could tell, but unfortunately I am under a bond of secrecy. I have also served in the British Army in India. . . . I hope, should you think of publishing this letter or using it in any way, you will please withhold my name, as I have a strong wish not to let some certain people find out where I am. I remain, Yours truly, ———

In your last issue there is one who speaks of South America and hints at a lake of gold, dangers, disease and death perchance, and the silent stretches of the Amazon, and says he is going back.

He withholds his name, but kindly ask him if he would like to have an able-bodied chap of twenty-eight to go back with him, one in whom burns brightly the love of out-of the-way places, adventure, and unordinary pursuits.

If I can go down there and take a chance with all the dangers and hardships and come back with a little yellow gold, all right; even if I come without it, 'tis much better than living in dull certainty from day to day. Tell him, please.

Sincerely yours, and his, ———

BISMARCK, Missouri.

If the author of the enclosed letter, clipped from your November issue, wants a man who will go with him, stay with him, and return with him from the Amazon country, I should be glad to communicate with him. Will you forward this?

Yours very truly, C. A. GRISHAM.

DURAND, Michigan.

. . . I have been over the world a little myself. I enlisted in 1901 and went to Cuba and served three more years, in which I went to the Philippine Islands and I stayed two years.

Now the Islands of Luzon and Mindanao are nearly all under control, but the other islands are full of head-hunters, as the savages are called from their practise of killing as many white men as they can and cutting off their heads. The island of Samar is an impenetrable jungle, but there is gold in its streams that wash down from the mountains, and plenty of it for the man that is brave and adventurous enough to go after it.

Now I am going to British Columbia for a couple of years and more, if there is enough in it to keep me there.

The letters in Camp-Fire are very interesting. The spirit of adventure is not dead; it just needs stirring up.

Hoping to get the name and address of the gentleman I mentioned, I remain ever a reader of ADVENTURE, B. G. YOUNGER.

———, Missouri.

Letter of Brazilian prisoner interested me exceedingly. Am one of party of four who are expecting to start for the Amazon in the Spring. Can't start until after March first. Would like to hear from party, if he contemplates making the trip again. Our party consists of three young men who have knocked about a bit, and myself, forty-eight, and an old Rocky Mountain prospector. Please forward this to party, and he may use his judgment about answering it. We will have about $5,000 or a little more to put into the venture.

Hoping to hear from you, I remain a constant reader, ———

AND here is a second letter from the gentleman himself. I greet his promise of the snake-skin with shouts of joy.

. . . But first I want to register a kick on the way my former communication appeared. I don't know whether it was my mistake or yours. It appears that I was fourteen years and nine months a captive; whereas it was only nine months, the fourteen years being the length of my absence from United States.

I was not unkindly treated by these people, but was made a sort of head man among them and allowed a sort of freedom; was also offered a dozen wives. And also a hut or shelter of my own. All of which I refused as repugnant to the taste of one who had been raised in a *civilized* country. Why my last remaining friend and myself were not killed when we were captured was a mystery to me at the time, but I was told several months later by an Indian (?) girl, that it was because of our long hair and beards which we had let grow to protect us from the burning rays of the sun and also from the bites of mosquitoes and poisonous insects to which cause the death of three of the party can be attributed.

The remaining two were killed at the time of

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our capture, their dismembered and horribly mutilated bodies being exposed to public view until nothing remained but a few bleaching bones which were cut up and carried away piecemeal by a huge white ant which infests that region.

When I think of my friends whom we buried—also the ones we didn't get a chance to bury—lying away down there in that Hell's back yard, it makes me wish I was able to give the Powder Trust an order for dynamite enough to blow South America clear off the map. Tell my companions of the Camp-Fire that I am progressing slowly with my plans for a return visit to those cussed heathen down there, when the tables will be turned. I expect to take with me about nineteen or twenty men, if I can get that number with the proper qualifications, equipped for a three years' stay, or an eternity. I have been offered unlimited financial support but prefer to have each member of the party share the expense, which course I think most likely to hold them together and cause them to work for the common good. I will retain the names you have so kindly forwarded to me, and hope to hear from others. My plans at present call for the start to be made from New Orleans or Galveston about the last of May. As my inquirers seem at a loss for a name for me, I will sign myself AMAZON CHARLIE.

P.S. I forgot to say that if possible I will bring you, Mr. Hoffman, that fifty-foot garden snake-skin.

FOLLOWS a letter from one of our many Canadian readers. There seems to be something in Canadian blood that pulses strongly at the call of adventure, whether the name of the man be Scotch, Irish, English or French. I am sorry Mr. McLachlan hesitated over taking his seat at the Camp-Fire. The only claim a man need advance for a seat with us is his desire to take it. If he can not look back upon so adventurous a career as does Mr. McLachlan, at least he belongs with us by reason of the spirit of adventure that is in him.

I hope you will pardon my intrusion into the sacred precincts of the circle of the Camp-Fire, but, believe me, the onus of the presumption lies entirely on the stalwart shoulders of my friend, Frederick William Wallace. He, on entirely erroneous grounds, believes me to be entitled to a seat around the Camp-Fire, but he is absolutely wrong. While, perhaps, it is true that I have traveled a little more than the average man, nothing wonderful or hair-raising has ever happened to me.

To be brief, I went through the latter part of the South African War, spent some time in the employ of Revillon Frères, fur traders, in one of their posts in Hudson's Bay, and was recently working for the Madeira-Mamore Railway in Brazil. I have traveled seven hundred miles up the Madeira from Manaos, and was in what is almost a *terra incognita* to white men. But even there my disappointing fairy was with me. I was in the middle of a yellow-fever epidemic, and never caught it. I was in the country of the Maranhuaca cannibals and never saw one. I never shot a jaguar or was bitten by a crocodile. Even in the war I was never captured by the Boers, was never wounded (though there I had a narrow escape, as the man next to me was shot at Hartz River), and never received the Victoria Cross. . . .

Yours sincerely, ALAN MCLACHLAN.

HERE is a letter from a country to the south of us. It was written some time ago, but I include it here as suggestive of the difficulties under which some of our out-of-the-way mail reaches us. The article in question finally arrived, but was not accepted. It dealt too intimately and too daringly with extremely dangerous facts and conditions. But it was one bully article.

About the middle of April, just passed, I mailed you a story of some 8,000 words. I gave it to a passenger on the northbound train from this city, to mail beyond the border. Inasmuch as I scarcely knew the man to whom I entrusted the packet, and as I have not heard of its arrival, I am taking the liberty to ask if you received it.

If it has not reached you, and you will drop me a line to that effect, I will mail a carbon copy which I have. This may take some little time to reach you, as I do not care to trust it to the ordinary mails and will have to wait until some person in whom I have confidence is going north.

Newspaper men are being thrown into jail here, almost every day, for publishing the truth when it happens to be against the Government; the mails are being opened, both incoming and outgoing, and matter obnoxious to the Government is being destroyed without any notice being given to the sender. On this account I am not mentioning the name of my story, but you possibly will remember it, as we had some correspondence on the subject several months ago.

HERE is an adventurer who ought to be useful on almost any kind of expedition:

PARIS, Texas.

Can you put me in communication with any party who is in the need of a good reliable man? Have served four and one-half years in the American Navy, being honorably discharged as Gunner's Mate, second class; since then I have punched cattle in Texas and Oklahoma, worked as a telegraph lineman, traveling salesman for an electric house, tried flying an aeroplane but came to grief, understand considerable of navigation, been employed as a mechanic in garage, can furnish the best of references. Would prefer employment in South America or the West Indies. Would have liked to have joined the Lange expedition, but supposed there were too many applicants. . . .

Sincerely yours, XXX

AS TO the following—well, Comrade Temple, take a seat! You certainly have earned one. But I think your

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guess on W. Townend's identity is wrong.

C. P. DIAZ, COAHUILA, Mexico.
October 25, 1912.

That yarn of "A Deal in Real Estate," in the current number of ADVENTURE, is simply great. I wonder if the writer, W. Townend, is not really Will Townsend, of Eagle Pass, brother of my dead friend, Webb Townsend, the sheriff of Maverick County some years ago. Will Townsend was a ranger and all-round frontiersman, and although I don't know his whereabouts at present, he is probably along the border somewheres and knows, as I do, the true inwardness of the situation, and the absolute absurdity and rascality of this talk of intervention in Mexico.

I've lived in Mexico since May 10, 1878, and for past few months have been using a Colt's Frontier .44 as a paper-weight on my writing-table, just as a matter of prudence you understand, for in these troublous times one can never tell what may happen five minutes in the future, *sabe?* But no intervention is needed; it is the Mexicans' own shindy, it is their country and if the Americans don't like it, why they are just as free to go back to the States as they were to come in here when peace reigned supreme and one didn't see a man killed hardly once in three months. I rather like it myself, to tell the truth, and it makes me tired to hear tenderfoot Americans howl and scream about Mexican outrages committed on Americans, and yet they persist in staying in the country and call for intervention. The —— fools, let 'em get out of here if they don't like it.

For thirty-four years I've had a perfectly corking time of it, and have been handsomely treated by high and low alike. Of course I talk their lingo fluently and have adopted many of their customs (too many for my own good, I fear) and married a Mexican girl, so it isn't easy for me to leave the country should I wish to, which I don't.

My qualifications for a place at ADVENTURE'S Camp-Fire are as follows: August 10, 1872, Left Bloomfield, N. J. (Glenwood Station), for California via Panama, on steamer *Bienville.* August 15, *Bienville* burnt and blew up off Watkins Island; forty-three lives lost, eighty-four saved. My name in list of dead, the governor, Rev. D. H. Temple, wearing crape on his plug hat for his lost son. I turn up September 12, fresh and smiling after riding through a hurricane on my way back, and touch the O. G. for 300 simoleons and start again for California and get there. Herd sheep and punch cows in California, 1877. Explore Puget Sound in Indian canoe, run through Deception Pass on half ebb-tide, self and partner reported drowned—Nit. 1878, go to Mexico. Have hunted bear, deer and alligators, prospected for mines, was captured by real bandits, rode as guard of the treasure-train. Stole my sweetheart and stood off the rescuers sent by her mother. Have had a —— of a wild time for more than thirty years. Am generally known along the Rio Grande as "Old Six-Shooter Bill." Can I sit in your game?

Very truly yours, ARTHUR D. TEMPLE.

HERE are two letters concerning "Lost Mines of the Great Southwest," and Mr. Stretch would seem to be an authority:

. . . the account of Breyfogle's Mine, like a rolling snow-ball, seems to have gained in trimmings since 1866. In that year, when State Mineralogist for Nevada, I was one of the first party which successfully crossed the Nevada desert from west to east, and met Mr. Breyfogle in Death Valley, to which point he had piloted a party of twelve men from Los Angeles in search of his mine, they, by the way, having invested something like a thousand a man in the enterprise. We were in camp with him for several days and during that time we heard nothing of green meadows and timber mountains. Breyfogle evidently remembered nothing of them at that time, for he confined his search to the absolutely timberless mountains, north of Furnace Creek, where we were camped, and the western slope of the range, directly facing the Panamint Range.

After two weeks of fruitless prospecting, some of his party joined ours and went eastward, while Breyfogle and the others returned to the south, yet Ash Meadows was only about forty miles east of Furnace Creek; yet it cost the life of one of our men to find it—died of fright at being alone, in all probability.

We were ninety days going out and only two weeks returning, losing the above man and nine horses on the trip. Our friends in Virginia City heard nothing of us for three months, so absolutely had the desert absorbed us, but we left a wagon-track and mapped the water-holes and accomplished our purpose, even if the trip was a wild-goose project of a man seeking reëlection.

There are several Death Valley sketches in my "Prospecting, Locating, and Valuing Mines," taken on this trip.

. . . The story of the Mexicans sinking a shaft three hundred feet on a gamble is a fairy-tale pure and simple, though the raconteur probably believed it. As surveyor for the mines on the Comstock Lode, and as State Mineralogist in 1866, I kept a monthly record of all work done on the lode, and the results were published by the United States Geological Survey in the large atlases of 1869 and 1881, under the auspices of Prof. Clarence King and Major Powell respectively. There was no need to sink a shaft (and you will fail to find it on the atlas sheets), because the surface outcrops were enormously rich and so continued on the Mexican-Ophir ground to a depth of some six hundred and fifty feet. The bonanza of 1894-5 was accidentally discovered on the thirteen-hundred-foot level of the adjoining Best & Belcher mine. I enclose a small fragment of the original discovery on the surface of the Ophir-Mexican (I have only some eight ounces left), and if you care to assay the same you will get as a value per ton somewhere between one thousand and ten thousand dollars. *Verbum sap.*

Yours truly, R. H. STRETCH.

THE two letters following were, by a strange chance, laid on my desk at the same time. On the face of it, it would seem that the writer of each had found exactly what he is looking for. If not, then how about the rest of you?

I have been investigating something of great interest to me. It is the location of a deposit of

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pitch-blend from which radium is extracted. I got the tip from a friend and he is in a position that pays good, so he doesn't care to go after it now. In my opinion he has lost his nerve since he got married. I have studied the formation of that part of the country in which it is located from all available sources and it has caused me to place a good deal of credence in it.

The trip itself is an interesting one, always with the possibility of adventure attached. It is in such an out-of-the-way place that there is no regular lines of boats touching there. It would be necessary to have a boat of my own, and there's the rub. I haven't the price. So what I want is from one to four men with red blood and a few dollars to go with me. It would take only four or five hundred dollars to buy the boat and fit her out.

I don't care to disclose the location of the place at present more than to say that it is in the Pacific Ocean. There are other things of value on this island also. So I stand ready to take a chance at any time.

If you care to run this in the Camp-Fire you have my permission to do so. Perhaps it may meet the eye of some one who would like to take it up. If I were near enough I would call upon Mr. Algot Lange and apply for membership in his expedition to the Amazon, as I traveled through that country several years ago.

Well, here's wishing you prosperity and health. Yours respectfully, R. S. BUTTON, 621 Crocker Street, Los Angeles, Calif.

Have you met a man in your meeting-place who wants that which I have? It is: *First*, a sea-going yacht, the old *Daphne*, built to cross oceans in old defender times; and credited with twelve knots under sail. She is a 22-ton sloop, 51 ft. x 16 ft. 6 in. x 7 ft., fitted with auxiliary gasoline power, and has sleeping accommodations for ten persons in individual berths. She has more hard stuff, solidity and ability than modern vessels of any class. *Second:* An inherent love of the sea, the strange places and things of the world. *Third:* A deep-rooted desire to do things out of the ordinary.

The above is what I have, and the following is what I want: A man or men who have a proposition, or knowledge of some good interesting things to do, but need the coöperation of such as myself and the "Ship." Of course the proposition should have a spice to it and a promise of material benefit to all concerned. I should greatly appreciate any efforts you might make toward the end of bringing these elements of adventure together. Yours very truly, HUGO C. GIBSON, 250 West Fifty-fourth Street, New York City.

Of course, the *Daphne* being at New York, there arises the serious problem of taking a 51-foot sloop around Cape Horn or through the Straits of Magellan, (a smaller boat has done it). Probably the Canal won't be finished in time. However——

THIS letter is from an Englishman now living in the United States, and it looks as if he had had at least his full share of adventure by land and sea:

. . . I have served my time at sea in a British merchant ship, starting out when I was about fourteen and a half years old. Deserted my ship in Australia, breaking my articles of apprenticeship and home ties at the same time, and, from that time until the day I was twenty-one, my folks did not know where I was or what had become of me—and I doubt if they cared.

During the six years I went all over Australia, working as tar-boy on sheep-runs in New South Wales and Southern Australia, and working around pearling fleets in Torres Straits and off New Guinea. I shipped before the mast in a German bark for Portland, Oregon, and deserted at San Francisco, luckily for myself, for she was never heard of after going through the Golden Gate. I and my chum made our way across America from west to east, punching cattle, busting bronchos, mining, painting and doing anything that came along.

I served in the British Army during the Egyptian Campaign and in the Boer War. I hobnobbed with Indian princes and Chinese mandarins, and have been as far as any white man into the interior of China. I have been up in the Arctic Circle alone, on a trading station in Baffin's Land, where my nearest white neighbor was 125 miles off. I sailed a 105-foot schooner from Brisbane, Australia, to Southampton Water, England, in ninety-one days, and have worked as mate on a British tramp steamer, smuggling pilgrims over to the Holy Land for the Mecca pilgrimage.

I have eaten with cut-throats and bandits, have slept out in the Domain, in Sydney, with newspaper blankets to keep me warm, and have attended royal garden parties in England by command of his Majesty, King Edward the Seventh. I have done newspaper work in Paris, London, Sydney, New York, Chicago and here, so I certainly have had a variety of experiences to draw on. . . .

Yours very truly, ——

AN ITEM in the December ADVENTURE mentioned a Camp-Fire member who wanted to guide a hunting-party in the Stikine country, B. C. From another member of the Camp-Fire, J. Wardlaw Stewart, P. O. Box 1357, Victoria, B. C., come a letter, a report on the country, newspaper clippings, a large special map and an offer of friendly service to Camp-Fire members. To the first member applying I will send Mr. Stewart's information, trusting him to avail himself of it quickly and hold it ready for the next man that may apply. To be returned to me in the end.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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Everybody's Magazine

"The Iron Trail," another smashing new serial by Rex Beach, begins in the January EVERYBODY'S. A big, powerful, man's-size story of Alaska, full of action and ginger from the "kick-off." It's the kind of yarn that's as welcome as a drink in the desert to the man or woman bored stiff by the "usual." "Adventure" readers particularly will appreciate "The Iron Trail."

Edwin L. Sabin has an article called "Glorious Winter" that'll take you back to your own old-days surer than memory itself. He hasn't missed a thing that you've ever done, seen, felt or eaten as a kid. He's even printed a recipe for taffy that you can *taste*.

On the serious side of things, read Thomas Lawson's fourth instalment of "The Remedy." It demonstrates convincingly how to legally curb Stock Gambling. These are only three of several unusually good items in the January

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